
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALLOCATION LISTENING SESSIONS



March 2004

Prepared for the

Texas Department of Transportation

by the

Texas Transportation Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

State legislation approved in 2003 provides direction to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in determining the formula for allocating state and federal funds for public transportation services in small urbanized and rural areas of the state. House Bill (HB) 3184 directs the Texas Transportation Commission to “adopt rules establishing a formula allocating funds among individual eligible public transportation providers. The formula may take into account a transportation provider’s performance, the number of its riders, the need of residents in its service area for public transportation, population, population density, land area, and other factors established by the commission.”

Also enacted in 2003, HB3588 transfers responsibility for providing transportation for health and human services to TxDOT and further directs the department to encourage public transit providers to agree on the allocation of specific services and service areas. The department may develop an interim service plan for an area if the local providers are unable to reach agreement on a service plan.

To help address the funding formula directive and other responsibilities, TxDOT sponsored a statewide videoconference and six listening sessions to obtain comments and suggestions from the public, transit providers, and other groups. The sessions related primarily to receiving comments on the funding formula, although comments on related topics were obtained. Individuals were also able to provide written comments at the meetings, through the mail, and through an Internet site set up by TxDOT. The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) assisted with facilitating the listening sessions and documenting all of the comments received.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE COMMENTS

The videoconference and the six listening sessions all followed a similar format. A representative from TxDOT’s Public Transportation Division opened the meeting by welcoming the participants. The opening comments were followed by a videotape of Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Ric Williamson. TxDOT staff then provided an overview of the rule-making process and the timeline for adopting a new funding formula. The major focus of the meeting was to receive comments from attendees. This portion of the listening session was facilitated by TTI staff. After the comment period, TxDOT representatives thanked participants, noted the other methods available to provide comments, and closed the meeting.

As noted previously, individuals and groups were provided with different opportunities to comment on the funding formula and related topics. The following methods were available to provide comments to TxDOT.

- Provide verbal comments at the videoconference and the listening sessions. Comments were limited to three-to-five minutes.

- Provide written comments at the videoconference and the listening sessions using the comment forms or turning in prepared comments. The comment forms and prepared comments could also be mailed or faxed to TTI.
- Provide written comments through the TxDOT Internet site at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>.

A total of 312 individuals, not including TxDOT and TTI staff, attended the seven sessions. Of these attendees, 88 individuals provided verbal comments. A total of 58 written comments were received at the meetings and through the mail, and 56 comments were received through the Internet. Thus, a total of 202 comments were received through the different methods. Ten individuals spoke at two sessions and at least 15 individuals spoke and provided written comments.

TxDOT staff attending the videoconference and the listening sessions included representatives from TxDOT senior management, the Public Transportation Division, and the districts. When TxDOT and TTI staff are included, approximately 400 people attended the seven sessions.

COMMON THEMES

Six common themes emerged from the 202 comments received from speakers at the listening sessions, the written forms, and Internet site. These themes are 1) the need for public transportation, 2) funding levels, 3) the funding formula process, 4) a new funding formula, 5) performance measures, and 6) health and human services transportation coordination. The comments related to these topics are summarized in this section.

Need for Public Transportation

All the comments received referenced the important role public transportation plays in small urban and rural areas of the state. Speakers stressed the critical role these services play in providing mobility to people who otherwise would not be able to travel to work, medical treatments, and social activities. Many comments also stressed the importance of health and human services transportation and the critical role it plays in transporting persons with disabilities, the elderly, and individuals needing medical treatment.

Approximately 60 comments focused on the need for more public transportation services in specific areas. Comments on the need for additional service came from providers, users, social service agency representatives, and advocacy groups. Examples of these requests included extending weekday service into the evening in Waco and more Sunday service, providing service in Fort Bend County, and adding service in East Texas, West Texas and the Panhandle, the Rio Grande Valley, and other areas.

The needs of special user groups and the unique needs of different areas were highlighted in about 50 comments. Many of these comments noted the importance of transportation for the elderly and the disabled in their areas. Examples of the unique needs of different parts of the state included the low population density and long distances to serve residents in West Texas, the

transit systems in communities along the Texas/Mexico border transporting significant numbers of Mexico residents who cross the border on a daily basis, and the large numbers of visitors to South Padre Island and other areas. Speakers from East Texas, West Texas, and North Central Texas noted the high percentages of elderly and low-income individuals in their areas.

General Funding Levels

Related to the need for more service, slightly over half of the comments also supported increased funding levels for all types of rural, small urban, and health and human services transportation service in the state. Individuals noted that funding has not kept pace with population growth in different parts of the state and with the needs of special population groups. Representatives from Collin County, the Rio Grande Valley, Fort Bend County, and San Antonio noted that population growth is placing additional demands for services.

The increasing cost of providing service was also noted by 10 providers and agency representatives. In addition, some speakers commented on the need for more funding for currently unserved areas or minimally served areas, such as parts of Fort Bend County, Midland-Odessa, and other regions. Individuals in Atlanta, Yoakum, and Fort Worth stressed the need for stable, predictable funding to allow for long-term planning.

The Funding Formula Process

Positive comments were received on the videoconference, as well as the listening sessions, comment forms, and Internet. Participants in the videoconference noted that it provided a good method to hear from individuals throughout the state without having to travel to a central location. Some individuals also recognized the challenges the department faces in developing a new formula and noted the difficulties encountered with previous efforts.

About 25 individuals indicated an interest and a willingness to continue to participate in the process of developing a new funding formula and other activities. Representatives from transit providers voiced strong interest in being involved in the process, and some indicated concerns that they not be left out of the process.

Approximately 40 comments supported not reducing current levels to any existing provider. These comments focused on the need to maintain existing services to ensure that service was not disrupted based on any change in the formula. This position was supported by the Texas Transit Association (TTA). However, other individuals cited the need to increase funding to historically under-funded areas and were concerned that not reducing current levels to any existing provider would mean no new or additional funds for others. Representatives from established systems suggested their funding should not be reduced simply because they have been operating longer.

About 20 comments suggested TxDOT conduct a comprehensive study of the services provided in each area before developing a funding formula, including a means of establishing goals and objectives and a vision for public transportation in the state. The TTA supported conducting a comprehensive study prior to finalizing a new formula.

Funding Formula

Although slightly over half of the comments addressed possible funding methods and criteria, no consensus on a specific approach or formula emerged from the comments. Approximately 10 comments recommended adopting the current formula as a temporary or interim formula until more comprehensive assessments are completed. Some 6 comments suggested using the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) apportionment published each year in the Federal Register, which is based on population and population density for small urban areas and population for rural areas.

About 10 of comments suggested using the 10 percent set-aside funding for commission selected projects immediately to address under-funded systems and later for incentives. Support was voiced in Lubbock, San Angelo, El Paso, Texarkana, and other areas for maintaining the 65/35 split for rural/urban state funds, while changing this split was encouraged by some speakers in East Texas.

Formula suggestions offered included a mix of factors including population, population density, and percentage of special population groups. Different percentages were applied to these factors and some groups included additional elements such as historically under-funded regions and performance measures.

Approximately 40 individuals suggested the formula should recognize the differences and the unique needs of various parts of the state. These needs included population growth, larger percent of those populations that are in need of public transportation, low density-long distance, long distance or limited access to medical facilities and health care services, high demand in border cities, need for access to employment to support workforce programs, and contributions to the local economy.

Comments from many areas noted that the funding formula should not be based solely on population. Instead, the size and the needs of the population groups should be factored into the formula. Approximately 10 comments suggested the use of bonus incentives for items such as coordination and efficiency. Some five providers and other representatives supported more flexibility in the use of available funding for both capital and operating needs, rather than designating funding for one or the other. Other suggestions on factors to use in a formula included coordination with other providers, the number of trips provided and the number of people served, the local match provided, percent of population that is elderly, percent of population with disabilities, size of the service area, lack of current services, and targeted performance measures.

Performance Measures

The possible use of performance measures was addressed in approximately 30 comments. There was a general consensus that any use of performance measures must be based on verifiable criteria. Suggestions were made that the industry needs standards for data reporting and calculation of measures. Using performance measures targeted to each system, not as comparison among systems, was stressed in some comments. The use of performance measures

as incentives for improved efficiency was also suggested. Using coordination with other services and groups as one performance measure was noted in a few comments.

Health and Human Services Transportation Coordination

There was evident support for greater coordination of health and human services and other public transportation. Approximately 50 comments focused on the integration of health and human services transportation into the department and how this transition would influence available funding and service delivery. About 15 of these comments suggested TxDOT evaluate combined funding from public transportation and health and human services before deciding on funding allocations. Comments also focused on the need to better coordinate health and human services transportation with public transportation services. A few comments stressed the need for one public transportation system that serves all groups.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
INTRODUCTION	II
OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE COMMENTS	II
COMMON THEMES	III
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND	1
ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED.....	1
ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT.....	2
CHAPTER TWO – SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS.....	3
LISTENING SESSION FORMAT.....	3
NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED.....	3
COMMON THEMES	4
CHAPTER THREE – VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH TxDOT DISTRICTS.....	11
ABILENE DISTRICT	11
AMARILLO DISTRICT	12
ATLANTA DISTRICT.....	16
AUSTIN DISTRICT.....	18
BEAUMONT DISTRICT.....	35
BROWNWOOD DISTRICT	35
BRYAN DISTRICT.....	36
CHILDRESS DISTRICT.....	37
CORPUS CHRISTI DISTRICT	38
DALLAS DISTRICT.....	40
EL PASO DISTRICT	43
FORT WORTH DISTRICT.....	44
HOUSTON DISTRICT	48
LAREDO DISTRICT	53
LUBBOCK DISTRICT	54
LUFKIN DISTRICT.....	66
ODESSA DISTRICT	69
PARIS DISTRICT	70
PHARR DISTRICT	72
SAN ANGELO DISTRICT	74
SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT	77
TYLER DISTRICT.....	82
WACO DISTRICT	98
WICHITA FALLS DISTRICT	98
YOAKUM DISTRICT.....	98

CHAPTER FOUR – LISTENING SESSIONS	101
HOUSTON LISTENING SESSION	101
WACO LISTENING SESSION	104
TYLER LISTENING SESSION.....	114
SAN ANGELO LISTENING SESSION	131
FORT WORTH LISTENING SESSION.....	136
EDINBURG LISTENING SESSION.....	146
APPENDIX A – LISTENING SESSION FORMAT.....	153
APPENDIX B – PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FORMULA MEETING	
HANDOUTS.....	155

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

State legislation approved in 2003 provides direction to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in determining the formula for allocating state and federal funds for public transportation services in small urbanized and rural areas of the state. House Bill (HB) 3184 directs the Texas Transportation Commission to “adopt rules establishing a formula allocating funds among individual eligible public transportation providers. The formula may take into account a transportation provider’s performance, the number of its riders, the need of residents in its service area for public transportation, population, population density, land area, and other factors established by the commission.”

Approved in 2003, HB 3588 transfers responsibility for providing transportation for health and human services to TxDOT and further directs the department to encourage public transit providers to agree on the allocation of specific services and service areas. The department may develop an interim service plan for an area if the local providers are unable to reach agreement on a service plan.

To help address the funding formula directive and other responsibilities, TxDOT sponsored a statewide videoconference and six listening sessions to obtain comments and suggestions from the public, transit providers, and other groups. The sessions related primarily on receiving comments on the funding formula, although comments on related topics were obtained. Individuals were also able to provide written comments at the meetings, through the mail, and through an Internet site set up by TxDOT.

Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) staff transcribed the tapes from the sessions and compiled all the written comments. This report documents the comments received through all of these methods. It summarizes the format of the sessions, highlights some of the common themes, and contains all of the verbal and written comments received.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

TxDOT and TTI staff completed a number of tasks as part of this project. TxDOT staff organized the February 10th videoconference, which linked all 25 TxDOT districts. TxDOT district staff were responsible for the on-site logistics, including the sign-in sheets, distributing the handouts and comment cards, and helping introduce the speakers. The district staff mailed or faxed the sign-in sheets and the comment cards to TTI.

TxDOT staff identified the general locations for the six listening sessions, developed the comment forms in English and Spanish, and produced the handouts and display boards for the sessions. TxDOT staff were also responsible for notifying the public, organizations, and the media about the listening sessions.

TTI staff worked with TxDOT district staff in Houston, Waco, Tyler, Fort Worth, San Angelo, and Pharr to identify possible meeting sites. TTI staff made final arrangements for the use of the sites after TxDOT approved the facilities. During the videoconference and the

listening sessions, TxDOT staff opened the meetings and provided an overview of the funding formula process. TTI staff facilitated and recorded the comment period. TxDOT staff closed the meetings. TxDOT staff provided TTI with a file of all the comments received through the Internet. TTI staff transcribed the tapes from the sessions, compiled the written comments, and completed this report.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is divided into three chapters following the Introduction. Chapter Two provides a summary of the videoconference and the listening sessions. The format of the sessions is described and the number of comments received is highlighted. The common themes from the comments are summarized, along with the differences in suggestions. Chapter Three provides the comments from the videoconference by each district, along with the comments received at the sessions, in the mail, and through the Internet. Chapter Four contains the comments from the six listening sessions. The verbal and written comments received at each meeting are included. Appendix A provides more detail on the format of the listening sessions and Appendix B contains the handouts provided at each meeting.

CHAPTER TWO – SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS

This chapter summarizes the format of the listening sessions, the number of comments received, and the key themes emerging from the comments. The format used for the listening sessions is described first, followed by a summary of the number of attendees and comments received through the different methods. The common themes emerging from the comments are highlighted, including topics lacking a consensus.

LISTENING SESSION FORMAT

The videoconference and the six listening sessions all followed a similar format. A representative from TxDOT's Public Transportation Division opened the meeting by welcoming the participants. The opening comments were followed by a videotape of Texas Transportation Commission Chairman Ric Williamson. TxDOT staff then provided an overview of the rule-making process and the time line for adopting a new funding formula. The major focus of the meeting was to receive comments from attendees. This portion of the listening session was facilitated by TTI staff. After the comment period, TxDOT representatives thanked participants, noted the other methods available to provide comments, and closed the meeting. Appendix A contains a more detailed description of the format for the listening sessions and Appendix B contains the handouts provided at each meeting.

NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Individuals and groups were provided with different opportunities to comment on the funding formula and related topics. The following methods were available to provide comments to TxDOT.

- Provide verbal comments at the videoconference and the listening sessions. Comments were limited to three-to-five minutes.
- Provide written comments at the videoconference and the listening sessions using the comment forms or turning in prepared comments. The comment forms and prepared comments could also be mailed or faxed to TTI.
- Provide written comments through the TxDOT Internet site at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>.

Tables 1 and 2 present the number of comments received through the different methods. As noted, a total of 312 individuals, not including TxDOT and TTI staff, attended the seven sessions. Of these attendees, 88 individuals provided verbal comments. A total of 58 written comments were received at the meetings and through the mail, and 56 comments were received through the Internet. Thus, a total of 202 comments were received through the different methods. Ten individuals spoke at two sessions and at last 15 individuals spoke and provided written comments.

TxDOT staff attending the videoconference and the listening sessions included representatives from TxDOT senior management, the Public Transportation Division, and the

districts. When TxDOT and TTI staff are included, approximately 400 people attended the seven sessions.

Table 1. Listening Session Dates, Locations, Attendees, and Speakers

Date	Location	Number of Attendees*/Speakers
February 10	Austin – TxDOT Riverside, Videoconference Links to 25 Districts	174/42
February 19	Houston – University of Houston, Sugar Land	13/4
February 23	Waco – Transit Intermodal Center	21/6
February 23	Tyler – Tyler Chamber of Commerce, Genecove Room	40/18
February 24	San Angelo – TxDOT District Training Room	19/4
February 25	Fort Worth – Intermodal Transportation Center	32/10
March 1	Edinburg – International Trade and Technology Center	13/4
	Total	312/88

*TxDOT and TTI staff not included.

Table 2. Total Speakers and Comments

Attendees	Speakers	Written Comments	Comments VIA Internet	Total Comments
269	88	58	56	202

COMMON THEMES

Six themes emerged from the some 202 comments received from speakers at the listening sessions, the written forms, and Internet site. The themes are: 1) the need for public transportation, 2) funding levels, 3) the funding formula process, 4) a new funding formula, 5) performance measures, and 6) health and human services transportation coordination. The comments related to these topics are summarized in this section. As noted, a consensus did not emerge on some of these topics.

Need for Public Transportation

All the comments received made some reference to the important role public transportation plays in small urban and rural areas of the state. Speakers stressed the critical role these services play in providing mobility to people who otherwise would not be able to travel to work, medical treatments, and social activities. Comments also stressed the importance of health and human services transportation and the critical role it plays in transporting persons with disabilities, the elderly, and individuals needing medical treatment.

Approximately 60 comments focused on the need for more transit services in certain areas. Comments on the need for additional service came from providers, users, social service agency representatives, and advocacy groups.

Examples of the requests for additional public transportation services included the following:

- riders in Waco requested extending current weekday service hours into the evening and Sunday service;
- county and agency representatives and riders in Fort Bend County noted the need for public transportation services in most of the county, which is not in the Houston METRO service area;
- representatives from social service agencies in the Austin area noted the need for more service for dialysis patients;
- speakers in San Angelo, Texarkana, and Central Texas said additional service is needed to provide access to employment, especially in support of job training and work force development programs;
- individuals in West Texas and the Panhandle noted the need for more service to special population groups, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and people needing special medical treatments;
- officials, riders, and agency personnel in East Texas noted the need for more services; and
- representatives for agencies in the Rio Grande Valley, Collin County, and the San Antonio area noted that services have not kept pace with population growth.

The needs of special user groups and the unique needs of different areas were highlighted in about 50 comments. Many of these comments highlighted the importance of transportation for the elderly and for persons with disabilities. The following examples of the unique needs of different parts of the state were highlighted by speakers:

- the low population density and long distances to serve residents in Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock, Lufkin, and San Angelo place special requirements on rural operators;
- the transit systems in communities along the Texas/Mexico border transport significant numbers of Mexico residents who cross the border on a daily basis for work, shopping, and medical trips. Mexico residents may account for some 40 percent of ridership on these systems;
- the population base of South Padre Island is very small, but the transit system plays an important role in serving residents and visitors, especially during Spring Break; and
- representatives in Tyler, Amarillo, and Collin County noted the high percentages of elderly and low-income individuals in their areas.

General Funding Levels

Related to the need for more service noted previously, slightly over half of the comments also supported increased funding levels for all types of rural, small urban, and health and human services transportation service in the state. Individuals noted that funding has not kept pace with population growth in different parts of the state and with the needs of special population groups. For example, a representative from Brownsville noted a 40 percent increase in the city's population from 1990 to 2000, but no increase in the current funding for transit. Representatives from Collin County, Fort Bend County, and San Antonio also noted population growth placing additional demands for services.

The increasing cost of providing service was also noted by 10 providers and agency representatives. In addition, some speakers commented on the need for more funding for currently unserved or minimally served areas, such as parts of Fort Bend County, Midland-Odessa, and other regions. Individuals in Atlanta, Yoakum, and Fort Worth stressed the need for stable, predictable funding for long-term planning.

The Funding Formula Process

Positive comments were received on the videoconference, as well as the listening sessions, comment forms, and Internet. Participants in the videoconference noted that it provided a good method to hear from individuals throughout the state without having to travel to a central location. Some individuals also recognized the challenges the department faces in developing a new formula and noted the difficulties encountered with past efforts.

About 25 individuals indicated an interest and a willingness to continue to participate in the process of developing a new funding formula and other activities. Representatives from transit providers voiced strong interest in being involved in the process, and some indicated concerns that they not be left out of the process.

Approximately 40 comments supported not reducing current levels to any existing provider. These comments focused on the need to maintain existing services to ensure that service was not disrupted based on any change in the formula. This position was recommended by the Texas Transit Association (TTA). However, other individuals cited the need to increase funding for historically under-funded areas and were concerned that not reducing current levels to any existing provider would mean no new funds for others.

About 20 comments suggested TxDOT conduct a comprehensive study of the services provided in each area before developing a funding formula. This approach was recommended by the TTA. Establishing goals and objectives or a vision for public transportation in the state before setting criteria for funding allocation was suggested in some comments. These individuals further suggested that the funding formula could then be related to the goals for public transportation.

Funding Formula

No consensus emerged on a specific formula or funding criteria. Slightly over half of the comments addressed possible funding methods and criteria. No consensus on a specific approach or formula emerged from the comments, however. The following suggestions were

made for items to be considered in a new funding formula and specific approaches to a new formula. The groups or individuals recommending the formula or approach are noted as appropriate.

- Approximately 10 comments recommended adopting the current formula as a temporary or interim formula until more comprehensive assessments are completed. This approach was suggested by representatives from Brazos Transit District, as well as individuals in East Texas, North Central Texas, Central Texas, and the Valley.
- Approximately 6 comments suggested using the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) apportionment published each year in the Federal Register, which is based on population and population density for small urban areas and population for rural areas. This approach was favored by individuals in West Texas.
- About 10 comments suggested using the 10 percent set-aside funding for commission selected projects immediately to address under-funded systems and later for incentives. This approach was recommended by the TTA.
- Support was voiced in Lubbock, San Angelo, El Paso, Texarkana, and other areas for maintaining the 65/35 split for rural/urban state funds, while changing this split was encouraged by some speakers in Tyler.
- The Just Transportation Alliance recommended the following formulas for non-urban and small urban systems.

Nonurban Formula

- Demographic need index – 40 to 60 percent.
- Geographic accommodation index – 10 to 15 percent.
- Performance measures and guidelines – 30 to 40 percent.

Small Urban Formula

- Demographic need and density index – 65 percent.
- Performance measures and guidelines – 35 percent.

- The East Texas Council of Governments recommended the following formula.
 - Rural population – 50 percent.
 - Population density – 35 percent.
 - Economic disadvantaged – 5 percent.
 - Population of elderly and the disabled – 5 percent.
 - Performance measures – 5 percent.
- Another suggestion from Tyler included the following factors.
 - Land area – 35 percent.
 - Population – 35 percent.
 - Population with disabilities – 5 percent.
 - Elderly population – 10 percent.
 - Residents under poverty level – 5 percent.
 - Historically under-funded regions – 5 percent.
- The Austin Resource Center for Independent Living suggested a competitive advantage in funding distribution based on the following factors.

- Accessibility to system.
 - commitment of local funds to expand the capacity, and
 - connectivity to other services.
- Individuals in El Paso suggested the following factors.
 - Passengers
 - Passenger miles.
 - Revenue vehicle miles.
 - Revenue vehicle hours.
 - Population.
 - Trips generated.
 - Performance.
- Approximately 12 comments recommended allocating funds based on the needs of transit customers and communities statewide and the performance of transit systems.
- Some 40 individuals suggested other factors, noting the formula should recognize the differences and the unique needs of various parts of the state. These needs included population growth, larger percent of those populations that are in need of public transportation, low density-long distance, long distance or limited access to medical facilities and health care services, high demand in border cities, need for access to employment to support work force programs, and contributions to the local economy.
- Approximately 10 comments suggested the use of bonus incentives for items such as coordination and efficiency.
- Five providers and other representatives supported more flexibility in the use of available funding for both capital and operating needs, rather than designating funding for one or the other. This need was reflected in comments from the Rio Grande Valley.
- Some 10 comments recommended that the new formula not simply continue historic funding levels. This need was reflected in comments from the Tyler and Corpus Christi areas.
- Comments from many areas, including Amarillo, Corpus Christi, and the Rio Grande Valley noted that the funding formula should not be based solely on population. Rather, the size and the needs of the population groups should be factored into the formula.
- Other suggestions on factors to use in a formula included coordination with other providers, the number of trips provided and the number of people served, the local match provided, percent of population that is elderly, percent of population with disabilities, size of the service area, lack of current services, and targeted performance measures.

Performance Measures

The use of performance measures was addressed in approximately 30 comments. The following elements highlight the major focus of the comments received on performance measures.

- Using performance measures must be based on verifiable criteria. The industry needs standards for data reporting and calculation of measures.
- Use performance measures to reward performance, but do not use them as a basis for the initial allocation of funds.
- Use performance measures targeted to each system, not as comparison among systems.
- Use performance measures as incentives for improved efficiency.
- Use coordination with other services and groups as a performance measure.

Health and Human Services Transportation Coordination

There was evident support for greater coordination of health and human services transportation and other public transportation. Approximately 50 comments focused on the integration of health and human services transportation into the department and how this transition would influence available funding and service delivery. About 15 of these comments suggested TxDOT evaluate combined funding from public transportation and health and human services before deciding on funding allocations. Comments also focused on the need to better coordinate health and human services transportation with public transportation services. This need for enhanced coordination was noted by speakers at the Fort Worth listening session. A few comments stressed the need for one public transportation system that serves all groups.

CHAPTER THREE – VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH TXDOT DISTRICTS

The first listening session was a videoconference with all 25 TxDOT Districts on Tuesday, February 10, 2004. The videoconference originated from TxDOT's offices at 200 E. Riverside, Austin, Texas. Individuals throughout the state traveled to the local TxDOT district to participate in the videoconference. This chapter presents the comments by speakers at the videoconference, comments submitted at the districts, comments sent to TxDOT or TTI, and comments received through the Internet site. The speaker comments were taken from the tape of the videoconference. Only very minor editing was done on the written comments. Some of the names on the sign-in sheets were difficult to decipher. Any errors in the spelling of names are the authors.

ABILENE DISTRICT

Attendees

Dana Myers, ASBDC, Inc.
Debra Rector, TxDOT Abilene District
Daniel Richardson, TxDOT Abilene District
Sue Henderson, THD-MTP
Samantha Manski (for Amy H. Foerster), City Transit

Speaker Comments

No individuals attending the meeting in Abilene provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Leo Jackson Jr., Snyder, Scurry County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I believe that it should stay at the present rates of 65 percent rural and 35 percent urban because of the importance of the needs of the handicapped and disabled who have no other ways to get to the doctor and to medical treatments, people who would otherwise die due to no way to get help. Without this rural percentage I could only go to dialysis one time a week due to the 89 mile one-way distance or the 180 miles round trip. Please leave the formula as it is! PLEASE?

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. This county seems not to care because it is the richest county in Texas and lots of people have cattle and can easily commute to Lubbock, Abilene, or Big Spring. The poor ones like me and others depend on SPCAA/SPARTAN transportation to get us to and from dialysis treatments and this is some 600

miles round trip a week. This county has indigent programs but they do not help with transportation.

No Name Provided, Abilene, Taylor County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I feel the key factor is keeping the issue as simplistic as possible due to the fact that a consensus will be difficult (at best) to reach due to everyone being concerned about their own "piece of the pie." Thus, I feel that going with the Federal Register seems to be the fairest solution to all concerned. Should certain performance-based measures be taken into consideration, the results can be skewed as the bottom line pertains to these being federal dollars. A skew may result from a passenger base not being consistent in regard to U.S. citizenry.

AMARILLO DISTRICT

Attendees

Anna Blyton, Amarillo City Transit
Milton R. Pax, Moore County
William Harvey, TxDOT Amarillo District
Gary Holwick, Amarillo MPO
Kenneth Petr, TxDOT Amarillo District
Donna Bannavong, Amarillo City Transit
Dean Bvanel, Amarillo Globe News
Billy Barclay, Amarillo City Transit
Susan Stochett, TxDOT Amarillo District
Brenda Knoll, TxDOT Amarillo District
Mark Tomlinson, TxDOT Amarillo District
Judy Phelps, City of Amarillo
Gerald Payton, Pandhandle Transit

Speaker Comments

Judy Phelps, General Manager of Amarillo Transit

I appreciate this opportunity to talk about public transportation here in Amarillo. Unfortunately, you will not be able to hear from any of our riders this evening because the last bus serving this area leaves at 5:30 p.m.

Please do not think that just because transit riders are not here that transit is not important here in Amarillo. Transit is critically important. Public transportation is the only way many people are able to go to the doctor, to the hospital, grocery shopping, and to take care of other daily needs. Public transportation is their lifeline.

We provide bus service on eight routes. Our headways are 45 minutes. Our riders are quick to point that out that people can travel from Amarillo to Lubbock faster by car than they can from Northeast Amarillo to Southeast Amarillo, which is a two-hour trip. While that may not seem like a major problem to some of you, for many people it means they are not able to obtain employment. Just taking care of daily necessities is difficult, if not impossible for many people due to limited service.

Operating our system is expensive and our costs seem to rise every year. Federal and state funding has been stable over the years. We are not opposed to trying to make our system more efficient. We are always looking for ways to improve. It is very difficult to develop a funding formula that is fair to all citizens across the state. TxDOT and transit systems have been struggling with this issue for years. Two years ago we had opted to go to the federal funds that were allocated in the Federal Register each year. We have looked at level-of-service, historical funding levels, and other allocation methods. We have not been able to come to agreement on an approach.

Comment Forms Received

Jim Miller, Amarillo, Randall County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I think the amounts approved by Congress that are in the Federal Register are the fairest way to allocate funding.

Donna Bannavog, Amarillo, Potter County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I think population density should be a key factor, as it is in the Federal Register. Population is a fairly, all-inclusive number because whether the consumers are disabled, elderly, low income, students, or fall into any other category they are factored as part of the population.

I object to using other variables because they will not be fair measures. Every system faces the same problems and the only differences are in the degree of the problems. If variables such as levels-of-service or other factors are used to develop a formula, how and what will determine which problems are more important. Even if agencies could agree on specific factors, extensive time must be spent developing fair measures. In essence, the focus only shifts from a formula to a method of measurement.

The video teleconference was a great opportunity, but at the same time it is human nature to request what is in the best interest of the individual systems. Resources will forever be limited. Therefore, it is not appropriate for any system to request a formula that provides them more funds.

Brett Lawler, Amarillo, Potter County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The key factor for distributing funding is to use the amount approved by Congress and printed in the Federal Register. It is the only way to fund public transportation without penalizing each agency and their customers.

Each community has their own needs for public transportation and there should be no measurement for allocating funding based on comparison of these needs. Geographical location plays a big role in ridership; therefore, creating a formulary based on ridership, passenger miles or even cost per trip would be unfair and biased. Based on the differences of each community, their needs for public transportation, and their geographical location, allocating funding using comparison methods of any type would be unfair and biased.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Amarillo City Transit's customer base is primarily out of Potter County. Nearly 20 percent of citizens in Potter County live 100 percent below the poverty level. The state average is 15.4 percent. In addition, 12.6 of Amarillo's population is over 65 and the state average is 9.9 percent. There are 37,182 persons with disabilities in Amarillo (22,148 in Potter County and 15,034 in Randall County). These numbers represent the vast majority of Amarillo City Transit's customer base. The City of Amarillo, which is both in Potter and Randall Counties, provides public transportation within the city limits west of Lakeside Drive. Passengers utilizing Amarillo City Transit have very limited or no other source of public transportation and many of our passengers are not able to afford other means of public transportation. Without public transportation, they would not have access to medical facilities, and educational opportunities, access to resources that community service agencies provide, and access to jobs or future employment opportunities. These figures in no way define or justify the need for Amarillo to get a larger portion of the funding, however. Amarillo does deserve the funding agreed upon by Congress as do all public transportation providers.

Comments Received VIA the Internet

Judy Phelps, Amarillo, Potter County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The only way to distribute federal funds in an unbiased manner is to use the amounts approved by Congress and printed in the Federal Register. If you use other methods or criteria, you will penalize each public transportation provider because their community is different. You heard examples of these differences over and over during the teleconference on Tuesday, February 10, 2004.

For example, you heard many providers describe how they would like to see the formula approached. If you listened carefully, they focused on a type of formula that would include elements which would give them a bigger piece of the allocation. In many cases, the agency excels in a particular area simply because of their geographic location.

For example, Laredo was quick to ask TxDOT to include passenger trips in the funding formula. What they did not explain was why they have so many passengers. It is a widely known fact that it is because they are located on the border and many of their passengers are not residents of the U.S.

Which brings up a completely different set of problems when you consider that it is not fair for the citizens of Texas to subsidize border transportation that is primarily utilized by citizens of Mexico? For Laredo to use the location on the map as a criterion to justify receiving additional public transportation dollars is wrong. This brings us to the conclusion made by the small urban providers after many years of wrestling with this issue. *What is fair to one transportation provider is unfair to another.*

These types of meetings also produced negative feelings between the providers which were repeated during the teleconference as well. This point was apparent when the East Texas Council of Governments (rural 5311 provider) stated that it is not fair for two organizations to get the majority of the 5311 funds because they started their transportation systems 20 years ago. If you will remember he also brought along a bar graph to illustrate the point.

Everyone spoke about changes taking place in their communities. These included an aging population, population density, income, and the environment they operate in. During that discussion there were many commonalities. The statements we most often heard were:

- the amount of funds to provide public transportation is inadequate,
- each system must maintain their current funding levels,
- passengers must endure long headways on fixed routes and paratransit,
- public transportation is important to their customers,
- inability to maintain current service levels if funds are cut, and
- need for additional transportation dollars.

Before you decide on a formula, you must go and visit the public transportation systems to see how the formula will impact the system. After you witness the diversity in each community and how it affects operating conditions, you will begin to see that using the Federal Register is the only choice for distributing funds.

If you want a formula that will encourage each agency to perform better, then develop goals specifically designed for that agency that will address problem areas. For example, if you take the other approach and use passenger trips as a benchmark for funding, no matter how hard my staff and I work at Amarillo City Transit, we will never be able to compete with Laredo and the number of trips they can provide simply because of Amarillo's geographic location.

If you must consider performance measures, then measure each provider against themselves. Even this approach is not without its flaws and will not give a true picture of performance. There are many factors that will affect the cost of providing public transportation that is out of the control of the provider. Factors such as fuel prices, vehicle maintenance costs, which have a direct relationship according to the age of the fleet, employment in the community, and agency funding levels within the community all affect the cost of providing service.

I realize that TxDOT is also interested in agencies that are successful in accumulating additional operating and capital funds through contributions in the community. For example, an agency would be rewarded if they successfully negotiate a contract with a manufacturing plant that would pay a transportation provider to shuttle their workers to and from the plant. Once again, using these types of programs only reward communities that have those opportunities and punishes communities that do not have those types of employers in their service area.

If you truly want to increase the amount of funds available for public transportation, you can require that all agencies charge a fare for each one way trip provided and require a local match. A local match would not include in-kind contributions or matching federal dollars with state funds.

Any formula that is developed and used must be verifiable. If you use a needs-based formula that takes into consideration income, poverty levels, access to an automobile or if you use operational type data such as passenger counts, miles traveled, cost per mile, etc., these are examples of statistics that can be manipulated so that an agency can obtain additional funding. If you are looking for this type of information, I would recommend that you consider sources of information such as the census, National Transit Database, or other publications that would maintain the integrity of the formula and credibility in the distribution of public transportation dollars.

In closing, I will again recommend that you use the funding distribution as printed in the Federal Register. It is the only way to fund public transportation without penalizing each agency and their customers.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The City Amarillo, which is in both Potter and Randall Counties, provides public transportation within the city limits west of Lakeside Drive. Fixed route headways are 45 minutes and in many cases paratransit passengers are on the vehicle for approximately one hour.

Our customer base comes primarily from Potter County. The passengers who utilize Amarillo City Transit have very limited transportation options or no other source of transportation. Without public transportation, they would not have access to medical facilities, to educational opportunities, and to resources that community service agencies provide.

Potter County has the highest mortality rate in Texas for counties with a population of 100,000 or greater. Nearly 20 percent of citizens in Potter County live 100 percent below the poverty level. The state average is 15.4 percent. Some 12.6 percent of Amarillo's population is over 65. The state average of 9.9 percent. There are 37,182 persons with disabilities in Amarillo (22,148 in Potter County and 15,034 in Randall County). A survey conducted by Amarillo's Public Health Department found that 21 percent of their clients ride public transportation to access their services. These statistics underscore the importance of public transportation to the citizens of Amarillo and their lack of resources.

Many of Amarillo's citizens are among the poorest in the state and have significant health problems. Because of these issues, many of Amarillo's poorest citizens are unable to afford a car, insurance, upkeep, and fuel. This translates into a true dependence, based on need, for public transportation.

ATLANTA DISTRICT

Attendees

Sam Russell, General Counsel, Brazos Transit District
Lynda Pugh, ARK-TEX Council of Governments
Owetta Walton, ARK-TEX Council of Governments
Daniel Swanson, Texarkana Urban Transit District
Robert Ratcliff, TxDOT Atlanta District
Sonya Hudson, TxDOT Atlanta District

Speaker Comments

Sam Russell, former State Representative and General Counsel, Brazos Transit District

I had the privilege and pleasure of serving this area in the State Legislature from 1983 to 1992. I am also General Counsel for the Brazos Transit District, which provides public transit services in 16 counties and 94 communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer comments on behalf of Brazos Transit and to provide a historical perspective as you begin the process of developing a funding formula for

rural and small urban fixed transit services, as well as the more specialized paratransit services for elderly and disabled individuals and those in need of transportation for medical treatment.

I served on the Transportation Committee during a number of sessions while I was in the Legislature. That assignment provided me with the opportunity to watch the rural and small urban public transportation programs develop and grow into an important component of the overall transportation system. Funding for those systems was, and still is, dependant on the legislative process rather than the sales tax revenue used in the metropolitan areas. Like the process the department is now undertaking, the rural and small urban transit system developmental process was not without its pains. Funding for rural and small urban systems for many years was accomplished primarily on a subjective basis. There was really no standard by which to measure systems. Nor was there any dedicated funding source that would afford them the ability to grown and plan for the future.

As a result, the legislature decided to place a funding formula in a statute. This action allowed systems to plan more efficiently for future services in the areas they served. Although I realize that the formula that has been in place for about 10 years does not escape criticism, it does provide for objectivity in determining funding. I think that is critical for maintaining successful rural and small urban transit systems.

Developing a new funding mechanism that is fair to all system will not be easy. I think it is critical that the department at least begin this process with an assurance to providers that they will not see cuts in their current funding levels. Currently, providers have increased services based on stable and predictable funding. I would ask the department to seek assistance or advice from the federal level. Federal agencies have been through a similar process in setting up a funding mechanism. There is no reason the department should be required to reinvent the wheel because time is critical in this process. September 1, 2004, will be here before we know it.

I would also urge you to continue to involve providers and other groups in this process. I certainly commend the department for using this videoconference connecting areas throughout the state, instead of selecting a few metropolitan areas. After all, the metropolitan areas in the state are served by metropolitan transit authorities that are not involved in this process at all.

On behalf of Brazos Transit, I would like to thank the legislature and especially the department for your commitment to the transit systems over the years. With your help these systems have been able to provide transportation services to millions of Texans who would not be able to travel otherwise. I am sure all of these systems, like Brazos Transit, stand ready and willing to assist you in this process. A smooth transition to a new formula is important so services are not disrupted for the people who depend on them. Thank you very much.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

AUSTIN DISTRICT

Attendees

James Schwerdt, Transport TEX
Paul Moon, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Joe Holland, TxDOT, Austin District
Michael Plaster, Texas Transit Association
Edward Johnson, Texas Transit Association
Charles Lee, Just Transportation Alliance
Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizen Fund
Glenn Gadbois, Just Transportation Alliance
Dave Marsh, CARTS
Larry Gardner, TRC
Phyllis Chandler, TxDOT, Administration
Bob Dickinson, SETRPC
Lucy Buck, CAPCO
Greg Brinkmeyer, TxDOT, Traffic Operations Division
Steve Simmons, TxDOT Administration
Cindy Miller, TxDOT Human Resources
Steven Polunsky, TxDOT, Legislative Affairs
Steve Revas, KUT Radio
Richard Neill, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division

Broadcast Room

Sue Bryant, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Susan Hausmann, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Bobby Killebrew, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Cindy Mueller, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Don Henderson, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Randall Dillard, TxDOT Public Information Office
Helen Havelka, TxDOT Administration
Gary Williams, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Charlie Sullivan, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Karen Dunlap, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Ginnie Grayson, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Donna Frederick, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Ben Herr, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Katie Turnbull, Texas Transportation Institute
Tina Collier, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Michael Plaster, Texas Transit Association

My name is Michael Plaster and I am Executive Director of the Texas Transit Association (TTA). I am here today on behalf of other public transit agencies that are affected by the change in the funding formula. TxDOT and the association of state public transit agencies have over the years struggled with devising a formula for the distribution of state and federal

funds. Devising a formula by its nature is both subjective and arbitrary. There are as many opinions of the possible array of formulas as there are individuals presenting an opinion.

The Association has felt for some time that a different approach is needed. Several years ago the TxDOT Public Transportation Division began using a level-of-service approach to measure the needs across the state in its annual report to the legislature. That approach was also a way to gauge general mobility throughout the state. Ideally, level-of-service should measure the transportation needs of any given community. To work, such an approach requires a funding commitment that meets the needs of local public transit in attaining that level of service.

Now, let me jump to health and human service transportation. For more than 20 years, various departments and agencies of the state and federal governments as well as public transportation, have desired to better coordinate health and human service client transportation into the system of public transportation. Recent changes in this area of transportation began with the adoption of statutes in the last legislative session. The combination of HB 3588 and HB 2292 changed the landscape, particularly regarding health and human services transportation. A variety of those transportation programs are now under the authority of the Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT. That being the case, this is time to take new look at how funds are distributed.

The Association urges the commission to continue to move forward toward a goal of coordinating state clients into the system of public transportation. Our goal should be to provide equal access to transit services no matter who the passenger is. Second, hold harmless transit agencies at their current funding level so state clients can be coordinated. Third, integrate transportation funding into public transit to address transit systems that are now considered under-funded and in such a way as to provide an incentive for transit systems to coordinate. This would avoid any disruption in transit service. Fourth, establish an operational and practical level of service that transit services are to achieve in the provision of services when accepting coordinated client transportation money.

The goal should be the promotion of general mobility for the general public inclusive of state clients. Use a collaborative approach between TxDOT, the Association, and transit agencies to develop minimally acceptable levels-of-service. There is no benefit to local communities, wherever they may be in the state, in having the disruption of service due to a change in the factors that make up any given formula. Rather, this approach, holding harmless current funding, plus infusing rural and urban transit with coordinated client transportation funds would preserve and maintain current transit services and the infrastructure it has in its drivers and vehicles.

This is a win-win situation for everyone involved. The sooner coordination occurs the sooner that general mobility can be across the state. Thank you.

Dave Marsh, Capital Area Rural Transit Service

Good evening. My name is David Marsh. I represent the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS). CARTS is headquartered in Austin and provides rural transit service in Bastrop, Lincoln, Burnett, Caldwell, Fayette, Hayes, Lee, Travis, and Williamson

counties. We pride ourselves on a community-based service provided with a regional perspective. This year we celebrated our 25th anniversary serving some 100 communities.

We fully appreciate the difficulty of the department's task in determining an equitable distribution formula for scarce resources. Any objective review, or anyone who studies the matter closely will likely conclude that the larger problem is not the distribution of funds, but rather that the amount of funds that are distributed are inadequate. Across the board we have to connect rural Texas to essential services.

One fact is in order. It is a cautionary lesson in formula making in itself. Federal funding formulas significantly favor metropolitan areas over rural areas. Locally, the metropolitan area of Austin receives approximately the same amount of federal transit funding as the entire state of Texas gets to distribute among 41 rural transit districts. This fact must be pointed out and considered as formulas are devised that may rob one district to give to another. The levels-of-service provided throughout rural Texas are already bare-boned as best. There must be a hold harmless guide. Do not cut the already marginal service levels at CARTS and at other rural transit divisions just to satisfy the perception of a need to change formulas.

I mentioned that CARTS provides service with a regional perspective. That is because the CARTS system was created after an exhaustive analysis of needs and a formal plan to address them that was done with the participation of all jurisdictions in the region. The funding created a stand-alone rural transit system governed by local elected officials. This is not the case with many of the systems now in operation. To disrupt funding to those who have diligently planned and built systems over the years to is not appropriate. Let's analyze needs, let's establish a phased implementation process to address it.

Let's look at more regional approaches to providing service. It took us 20 years to build up a system recommended by a regional CARTS plan. With changing demographics, it required us to continue to recalibrate and plan the next 20 year build-up. We all know this is how highway infrastructure is planned. While certainly highways and transit differ, the basic principal of planning infrastructure investments is shared.

Let's do our homework before we make any radical decisions and establish a statewide vision that will ensure every community has a basic mobility structure that it can count on. Let's encourage the department to fully use the many tools it acquired in the last session to provide a ride to all Texans, particularly those in rural Texas with few choices for mobility. We can do that if we work together and not apart. Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you today.

In closing, I just want to say one thing regarding all the comments I have heard this evening. Let's not forget that we are all in this process together. Let's remember that we all have a job to do and that the job focused on providing access to people who need service and we are all working hard to do that. The people in East Texas need more money, there is no question. We can find a way to address everybody's needs if we work together. Let's not fall into the trap of pointing fingers and accusing others for their different needs. We are all in this situation together. I really want to commend the department for this invaluable exchange. It has been quite interesting to talk to everybody across Texas and I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Comments Received Via the Internet

John Meinkowsky, Austin, Travis County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The Austin Resource Center for Independent Living (ARCIL) recognizes the need for increased funds for all of Texas transit systems. Serving the one in five Texans who do not have reliable access to a car is a tall order. Each service area and system must expand its capacity. Competitive advantage in funding distribution should be based on the following:

- accessibility of the system:
 - commitment of local funds to expand the capacity, and
 - connectivity to other transit services

TxDOT needs to establish a vision for all Texas transit systems. The degree that all services are usable by Texans with disabilities is integral to this vision.

Full accessibility of each service – fixed route or demand-response – should be considered a minimum standard for funding, not a vague and distant goal. The best way to create an accessible transit system is to build it that way from the ground up. Each transit center, bus stop, and other facility should be designed to meet the needs of people with all types of disabilities. Retrofitting is the least efficient approach.

All fixed route vehicles should be fully accessible, and demand-response or paratransit services should be equivalent in terms of service area, connectivity, cost to the consumer, and response time. Waiting lists and extensive reservation lags are in violation of federal standards.

All personnel should be trained and capable of serving people with all types of disabilities. Accessible vehicles and equipment should be kept in working order.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. ARCIL, Inc. is the Center for Independent Living serving the counties of Travis, Bastrop, Lee, Williamson, Milam, Bell, Burnet, Hays, Blanco, Caldwell, and Comal.

ARCIL is part of a state and national network of Centers for Independent Living. A Center for Independent Living is defined by the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, as a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agency that is designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities, and provides an array of independent living services. Texas CILs provide services to address individual needs in areas such as housing, financial assistance, employment, medical services, and personal care.

ARCIL supports and works in cooperation with the Just Transportation Alliance to develop coalitions to improve transit services.

ARCIL and other Texas CILs work closely with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and other state agencies to help Texans with disabilities establish and maintain community residences, with the aid of personal care services and other community supports. Through this effort, over 1,000 individuals per year are leaving nursing facilities and other

institutions. New programs allow access to community-based services and supports. Appropriate transportation is an integral part of the array of supports needed in the community.

Unfortunately, some people equate transportation for people with disabilities to Medicaid-funded medical transportation. This is only a small part of the equation. People with disabilities, all across Texas, need a full range of public transportation services to live and participate in their communities. Public transit systems are critical to access to employment, public services, shopping, education, recreation, voting, and all other aspects of community life.

Public transit systems must necessarily be expanded and improved. As the population ages, and as people with disabilities of all ages become more involved in community life, public transit has a larger and more important role.

Public transit systems must be designed with the idea that people use these services to function as citizens. Planning efforts must ensure that transit systems are designed in cooperation with creation of new communities, residential developments, employers, schools, and all types of businesses and services. Each transit service should reach critical points within its service area, and also connect to neighboring transit systems. Due to poor planning, transit systems often isolate the people who depend on them, or do not reach schools, employers, etc. Limited service hours restrict employment opportunities. Residential developments and large employers are located outside existing transit service areas. When transit systems reach the appropriate places, they often lack sidewalks or other accessibility features that would make them usable by people with disabilities.

Funding formulas can foster functional communities for all citizens by rewarding transit systems that engage in cooperative planning and development. A transit system that works for people with disabilities will work for all citizens. Fully accessible transit systems improve communities, increase safety, allow more walking and use of bicycles, and reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

No Name Provided, Bastrop County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Service levels are already marginal and there should be no cuts.

Jacquelyn Davis-Dozier, LMSW, Austin, Travis County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. As a social worker who deals with patients who have very limited resources, I think it is vital that funds be allocated to areas where transportation options are limited. Outlying areas such as Taylor, Hutto, and Lockhart that have no regular bus services, but have a large number of medically indigent patients need priority. There should be an emphasis on getting service to these areas that is more than every other day service.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Capital Dialysis serves almost 500 patients who require dialysis services at least three times a week, sometimes more. It is imperative that these patients have a dependable, affordable means to get to treatment. If our patients are unable to get to treatment, their very lives are in peril and they can die without it. CARTS is vital to getting our patients to this life-saving treatment. We actually need more

service to underserved areas because we often find ourselves unable to treat patients because they cannot get to a clinic. I believe that it is a sad situation when we find ourselves calling in a report to CARTS of a patient's death and in the same breath asking for their seat for another patient. As you prepare your budget, please consider that diabetes and hypertension (the number one and two causes of kidney failure) are on the rise. We need more, not less transportation resources. Also please carefully consider Round Rock's situation. There are two dialysis clinics there now and Capital Dialysis is opening a third this week. These facilities cannot provide treatment if the patients cannot get there. Feel free to contact me if you need additional input.

Mike White, Austin, Travis County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I continue to work in Williamson, Bastrop, and Hays counties with indigent hemodialysis patients who are totally dependent on the CARTS transportation system to go to dialysis appointments three times a week for a duration of four hours for each treatment. The current service level is insufficient for the needs of this population and every priority should be given to increase transportation services in these rural areas.

Jon Beall, Austin, Travis County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. A plan coordinated with the regional planning scenarios chosen by Envision Central Texas.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We need to invest in transportation options that will eventually reduce the amount of single occupant vehicle miles traveled.

Letter received from Susan Maxwell, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities is established under state law in keeping with the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Council consists of a 30-member board appointed by the Governor of Texas. The Council's mission is to encourage policy changes so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives. Consistent with federal law, 60 percent of our Council members are individuals with developmental disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities. Other Council members represent various state agencies and organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments related to the state funding formulas for Section 5311, Rural Area Public Transportation Providers and Section 5307, Small Urbanized Area Public Transportation Providers. The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities encourages the public transportation system to ensure the availability of accessible and affordable transportation for people with disabilities throughout Texas. This is particularly challenging in rural and small urban areas. According to the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), a higher proportion of seniors and people with disabilities must relay on public transportation in the rural areas than in urban areas. APRIL indicates that nationally only six percent of transportation dollars are dedicated to serving the rural population,

which makes up 25 percent of the total population. The disparity in funding leads to rural Texans identifying transportation as their number one need.

Presidential Executive Order 13217, entitled The New Freedom Initiative, and the Texas Promoting Independence Plan are coordinated efforts developed in response to the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court Olmstead decision. This decision directs states to provide timely assistance to institutionalized people with disabilities who are able and want to move to living in the community. Various state agencies have come together to develop “a comprehensive, effectively working plan that provides a system” of services and supports that nurtures independence and provides opportunities for a people with disabilities to be productive members of their communities. The Texas Department of Transportation is an integral link in the state’s commitment to people with disabilities. Public transportation in rural and small urban areas must be dramatically enhanced, to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to community living.

Within the context of the state funding formulas for Section 5311 and 5307, the Council offers the following comments and recommendations. The current formula does not include such variables as performance measures, changed needs of the populations, or changes in mobility services offered in the community through other sources. The Council supports the inclusion of the following criteria in the funding formulas:

1. the development of collaborative models which blend available resources into a coordinated transportation system, to incorporate such alternatives as vouchers, and vanpools for transportation related to employment, medical appointments, recreational and religious activities, public-private partnerships, transportation vouchers;
2. the development of consumer input through local advisory groups which include people with disabilities;
3. total accessibility of public transportation vehicles to people with mobility and/or sensory impairments;
4. improved pedestrian routes to include paved routes, curb cuts, and bus shelters which are accessible to people with mobility and/or sensory impairments; and
5. improved scheduling with trips being coordinated efficiently for riders regardless of county or urban boundaries which may be crossed.

To improve public transportation, the Council urges the department to expand the funding formula to require rural and small urban transportation centers which apply for funding to both demonstrate the transportation needs in their communities and to show progress toward making the above mentioned improvements. Thank you for considering the Council’s comments relating to the Rural (5311) and Small Urban (5307) Transit Funding Formulas.

Letter and Comments from Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizen Fund

Recognizing the formidable challenges before the department, the Just Transportation Alliances are pleased to submit the attached comments on behalf of the individuals, organizations, local

communities, and statewide constituencies with whom we partner in increasing the quantity and quality of transportation options for those who cannot or do not drive. Although we detail significant concerns related to the mechanics of gathering input, we are, nevertheless, appreciative of the department's attempts to ensure that the voices of constituents and consumers who use these services are heard and further, recognize the department's laudable intention to ensure a broader base of participation in this important discussion.

Should you have any questions regarding these comments, please do not hesitate to contact Texas Citizen Fund's Transportation Program Director Glenn Gadbois at 512 294 7446 or Glenn@JustTransportation.org or in the alternative, to contact me at 512 699 8136 or Sheila@JustTransportation.org.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Executive Summary

In the most recent Legislative session, the Texas legislature left little room for confusion in its assessment of the need for substantial changes in public transportation. Mandating that the commission and the department "eliminate waste in public transportation and generate efficiencies that will increase the levels-of-service," the Legislature provided the commission and by extension, the department, with the authority, power, and control over funds needed to accomplish these mandates.

To fully realize the mandate of the legislature, the commission must revise the fundamental operating principles that guide the state-administered allocation of funds to small urban and nonurban systems. Neither tweaking existing processes nor delaying change will meet the legislature's mandate. Instead, we would argue that the funding formula revision provides the commission and the department with a strategic opportunity, first, to revisit, assess, and revise these operating assumptions and second, that moving forward on these changes now creates the context for cooperation that will be required for the development of regional service plans. We would urge the department to adopt the following principles as it moves forward to revise the small urban and nonurban transit funding formula:

Principle 1:

That the commission can achieve greater equity in the distribution of state (and to a related extent, federal) funding by tying allocation of funds to (1) the needs of transit customers and communities statewide and (2) the performance of transit systems;

Principle 2:

That the commission and the department should prioritize performance accountability by identifying state transit priorities, clarifying performance expectations and goals, standardizing the measurements of these expectations and goals with greater uniformity, and tracking performance;

Principle 3:

To meet the legislature’s mandates, that the commission and department should induce innovation, efficiency, coordination, and exemplary performance by rewarding systems that meet the transportation needs of communities and individual customers;

Principle 4:

To accommodate differences among local communities and a smooth transition, the commission should provide for flexibility in the funding formula.

As developed more fully in the comments, we propose two revised funding formulas for the commission’s consideration based on a Demographic Need Index with specific supports provided to those rural systems with substantial geographic expanse and a dispersed, low-density population and those small urban systems with special generator considerations.

We urge the commission to move forward on initiatives that will allow for the use of toll credits and the resources of the Texas Mobility Fund in communities where local revenues are insufficient for federal match requirements. We urge the commission and department to pursue a policy of “listening” and institutional latitude and flexibility to absorb and accommodate emerging consequences associated with both the funding formula and the integration of health and human services transportation.

Finally, we urge the department to make significant improvements in its advance preparations, logistical sensitivity, and mechanisms for inclusion as it moves forward on the integration of health and human services transportation.

I. “Where one stands is a function of where one sits”

A project of the nonprofit Texas Citizen Fund, the Just Transportation Alliances seek to build coalitions of individuals, organizations, communities, and constituency groups locally and statewide who partner to increase the quantity and quality of transportation options for those who cannot or do not drive. As comments that represent the collective perspective of our partners, where we stand on the funding formula reflects unabashedly the often-observed perspective of those Texans who often sit on the fixed-route and paratransit vehicles of the state’s small urban and/or nonurban transit providers, as well as their families, allies, employers, communities of faith, social service support agencies, and others who support their use of these services as an essential element in their independence and fiscal, physical, and emotional well-being. Because of the importance of transportation to our partners, many have participated in the venues the department designated, whether through the video teleconference on February 10, during one or more of the five listening sessions held between February 19 – March 1, via email through the department’s website, or in other written comments.¹ These comments, therefore, serve as both a recap and elaboration of comments already made to and/or received by the department.

II. The Legislature has clearly taken a stand: It is a “new day” for public transportation in Texas.

While often benignly or otherwise, neglected by the legislature in sessions past, the Texas legislature left little room for confusion in its assessment of the need for substantial changes in public transportation. Characterizing the overall system as populated by “a multiplicity of public transportation providers and services, (that) coupled with a lack of coordination between state

oversight agencies (have) generated inefficiencies, overlaps in services, and confusion for consumers, the legislature mandated that the department specifically respond to this pitiable state of services by “eliminating waste in public transportation and generating efficiencies that will increase levels of service.”² In a step often missed post-legislative-mandate, the legislature not only articulated their express expectations, but also provided the commission and by extension, the department, the authority and power needed to accomplish these mandates. While the legislature indicated an expressed preference for certain strategies – for example, the use “to the maximum extent feasible, (of) the existing network of transportation providers, and in particular, the fixed route components of the existing networks, to meet the client transportation requirements of the state’s social service agencies and their agents” – the department/commission were provided considerable latitude in the design of strategies necessary to achieve these outcomes.

Critically, this latitude was complemented by express control over, perhaps, one of the most powerful tools that the department and the commission can wield: money. Not only did the legislature provide the department and the commission with the express authority to revise the current funding formula for small urban and nonurban systems, but also granted the commission standing discretion to increase or reduce the amount of a grant made to a public transportation provider, irrespective of the funding formula.³ With control over state funds and often, by extension, the source of the match for federal funds that many of these systems use, the legislature was thoughtfully ensuring that the department/commission would have the added benefits of the initially-compelling and/or often, magically restorative powers that access to and/or denial of funds often have on the unwilling and reluctant, particularly in light of the changes the Department would likely need to meet its legislative mandates.

III. To fully realize the mandate of the legislature, the commission must revise the fundamental operating principles that guide the state-administered allocation of funds to small urban and nonurban systems.

While certain differences in the approach to the funding formula revisions became rather predictable during the video teleconference and listening sessions, it was striking that many of those testifying assumed that the best course of action was to “refine” certain procedural and strategic processes in the allocation of funds and/or to delay the revision of the funding formula altogether. Repeatedly, some participants in the listening sessions encouraged the department to hold all systems “harmless” (i.e., not to change their specific funding allocation), to delay changes in the funding formula until the completion of the regional service planning processes (i.e., not to change the public transit formula until some later date), and/or to induce the commission to “donate” its 10 percent set-aside as a mechanism for responding to the specific and more generalized inequities in funding as substantive, informed responses to the legislature’s clear mandate for change. While we agree that the department and commission may well need to “refine” certain processes and to calibrate carefully the timing of and transition to specific policies and changes, we do not agree with the basic assumption made by many who testified – namely, that the status quo can be left largely intact and that the department and commission will, inexplicably, meet the legislature’s expectations nonetheless.

Instead, we would argue that the funding formula revision provides the commission and the department with a strategic opportunity, first, to revisit, assess, and revise the operating

assumptions and/or principles that guide state-administered allocation of funds to small urban and nonurban systems in Texas, and second, that moving forward on these changes now creates the context for the cooperation that will be required in the development of regional service plans. Rather than beginning with specific “tweaking” strategies that some would identify as moving the department forward (e.g., tinkering with specific funding allocations, delaying the formula revision, etc.), we believe that the department and commission should, instead, initially adopt guiding principles that will align the department and commission with the legislature’s expectations and move from this basis to the revision of the funding formula and related, to regional service planning. To this end, we would suggest the following principles be adopted by the commission as revises the small urban and nonurban transit funding formula:

Principle 1:

That the commission can achieve greater equity in the distribution of state (and to a related extent, federal) funding by tying allocation of funds to (1) the needs of transit customers and communities statewide and (2) the performance of transit systems;

Principle 2:

That the commission and the department should prioritize performance accountability by identifying state transit priorities, clarifying performance expectations and goals, standardizing the measurements of these expectations and goals with greater uniformity, and tracking performance;

Principle 3:

To meet the legislature’s mandates, that the commission and department should induce innovation, efficiency, coordination, and exemplary performance by rewarding systems that meet the transportation needs of communities and individual customers;

Principle 4:

To accommodate differences among local communities and a smooth transition, the commission should provide for flexibility in the funding formula

That these suggested principles markedly contrast with the current small urban and nonurban formulas that emphasize previous spending during the preceding year (nonurban) or biennium (small urban) relative to the total allocated to all systems within these categories is no accident. An inherent assumption in both our “stand” and in our recommendation is that the without fundamental change in the operating assumptions and/or principles, the state will simply continue to refine and recalibrate the status quo, a status that was the subject of its mandate for change.

As critical to the department’s consideration, many consumers, some operators, local government officials and staff, employers, social service agency representatives, and others also called for substantive changes during the department’s video teleconference and listening sessions. Repeatedly, consumers, public health professionals, social service agencies working with seniors and persons with disabilities, local mayors, parents, and transit operators, particularly those living and working in East Texas, cited the demographics of their communities and the notable absence of demand by those most likely to need transit as a consideration within the current funding formula. Related, consumers and advocates in/around the Houston metro area

cited the need for additional vehicles as the capacity of existing equipment is vastly outstripped by demand. While advocates in/around the North Central Texas area similarly cited unmet demand, many noted that small urban systems in the region's metropolitan areas (e.g., Arlington, NETS, etc.) have little incentive to coordinate their services with one another or to the region's metropolitan transportation agencies to ensure consumers seamless coverage as their funding is not dependent on cooperation or coordination. Participants in Waco indicated a need for additional transit services and extended operating hours, changes that are not currently feasible for many of the systems these consumers use. While consistently providing excellent service and innovating partnerships, providers such as the North East Texas Opportunities, SPARTAN, West Texas Opportunities, and CapRock, have no incentive to continue to excel and provide such exemplary service under the current formula. A repeated refrain throughout the February 10 teleconference by a number of county judges and elected officials was support for the revised funding proposal distributed in the spring-summer, 2004.

At its most basic, these concerns, whether specifically focused on funding or dimensions of "customer service," convey strong support for a significant overhaul of the transit funding formula, not simply a mild recalibration of a formula that considers neither need nor performance or delay. As a business practice, the demand for timely change was clear—we believe, in the long-term, the department's movement to such a model will not only support those consumers and communities who use these services in the short-term, but will also maximize the state's funds by investing in and building exemplary transit systems that meet the needs of the communities and customers they serve.

IV. Context for Proposed Nonurban and Small Urban Funding Formulas

In reviewing the proposed nonurban and small urban funding formulas that follow, we want to identify and highlight three basic context assumptions. First, in our modeling of the proposed nonurban and small urban funding formulas that follow, we sought to incorporate qualitatively the outlined principles. Consequently, the formulas "look" more complicated. While we would agree that the construction of a multi-level formula and performance measures will entail a more comprehensive evaluation of both community need and services than the current funding legacy approach requires, we would disagree with those who would argue that a more complex formula is inevitably synonymous with a lack of funding certainty. To the contrary, when implemented with clear objectives and measurable benchmarks, the proposed formula would provide as effective a predictive mode – if not more so – than that provided currently. Second, while the proposed formulas that follow include the percentage or value that we believe should be assigned to each element, these numeric values are essentially indicators that capture the emphasis or importance that we believe should be placed on each criterion, not necessarily representations of an inflexible, fixed value.

Finally, we are recommending that 100 percent of the available funding should be distributed according to the following formulas, a quantity that would explicitly include and incorporate what is now the 10 percent provided to the commission. During this initial three years, these funds, which previously were set aside for the commission would not lose their flexibility, but would, instead, be incorporated within a larger pot of funds that could be used by the department and commission to smooth the transition and to respond to community circumstances and needs.

In the long-term, the flexibility that the 10 percent set-aside once provided the commission could be recouped by pursuing new monies that could be used for special projects as needed.

To make the following text explanation more clear, Attachment A provides a summary diagram of the proposed funding revisions.

V. Nonurban Funding Formula

We would propose that the commission adopt the following three elements and their respective weight as it allocates its funds to nonurban systems:

Demographic Need Index Score (Assigned Weight: 40 – 60 percent)

Using demographic data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas State Data Center, and other objective resources, the department should develop a non-duplicated, county-by-county Demographic Need Index Score that serves as a “proxy” for the number of individuals who are likely to use or need nonurban transit services within a rural transit district. As widely acknowledged by the U.S. Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Transit Cooperative Research Program, “likely users” of rural transit are individuals with disabilities, seniors, and/or low-income families.

Only those counties and/or portions of counties that are actually served by a rural transit operator would be included in their system’s Demographic Need Index Score. In other words, although a rural provider may have a particular county in its rural transit district, if it does not, in fact, provide service in that area, its proxy score will not reflect the demographic needs projected for that county. Similarly, if a rural provider serves only a portion of a county, the Demographic Need Index Score will only be based on the projected need of the population that lives within the rural transit district – not, for instance, the overall population of the county which will include individuals who live in the urban centers also located within the county.

Geographic Accommodation Allowance (Assigned Weight: 10 – 15 percent)

Because some providers serve rural transit districts that are notable for their geographic expanse and their dispersed, low-density population, special accommodations will be required to respond to the challenges these providers face. Using measures similar to those used in other federal formulas that consider density or average mile per trip, for example, will provide an objective metric that will accommodate the challenges these providers face, while acknowledging the critical role these providers play in the lives of their customers who have few, if any, other transportation options.

Performance Measures and Guidelines (Assigned Weight: 30 – 40 percent)

The commission should identify and clarify the customer service priorities, operational benchmarks, and performance measures it will expect of those rural transit operators who receive

state funds. Once identified, the department – working with both operators, advocates, and consumers – should develop “best practice measurements” that align these priorities and expectations with data that can be generated and captured to gauge operator performance. Categories of measures could include customer service measures (e.g., on-time pick-up, drop-off, customer satisfaction measures); community impact measures (e.g., air quality, environmental impacts, economic development tied to transit services, etc.); compliance with legislative priorities (e.g., additional innovations in coordinating health and human services regional transportation planning cost-effectively, etc.); and operational performance (e.g., cost per mile, scheduled maintenance, etc.). Specific measures that respond to systems that confront special trip/population generators, such as large populations of students, commuters, and/or trans-border customers, could be provided with specific measures and benchmarks that capture their performance in serving these populations efficiently and/or effectively while flexibly adopting to the special demands placed on their systems.

Because systems differ dramatically in their capacity, expertise, community challenges, and size, performance benchmarks should be developed for each individual system as part of their annual contract development. Not only will such benchmarks accommodate systems of diverse size, organizational maturity, and status, the department will be able to effectively challenge each system to improve in terms that are relevant and meaningful to the communities and customers they serve, rather than assume a uniformity that does not exist.

Funding adjustments should be based on performance trends that use either three-year averaging or the best performance in two of three years as a method for controlling for year-to-year fluctuations. Three-year increments should also serve as the period during which adjustments to benchmarks can be set and continued progress measured and achieved.

Performance Measures and Guidelines During Transition: In the first three years of this transition, the department will need not only to devise performance measures, but many systems will be required to collect data that heretofore they never compiled. As a consequence, we would propose that while the measures are being constructed, baseline data is being compiled, and regional service planning is underway for the health and human services transportation, that the department use only the Demographic Need Index Score and the Geographic Accommodation Allowance (as applicable) to guide its allocations. During this period, that portion of funds that will, post-transition, be distributed based on performance measures can be used to soften transition to a need-based, customer-service focused distribution. The current 10 percent set-aside of commission funds would be included and incorporated to add additional resources.

VI. Small Urban Funding Formula

We would propose that the commission adopt the following two elements and their respective weight as it allocates its funds to small urban systems:

Demographic Need- Density Index Score
(Assigned Weight: 65 percent)

Using demographic data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas State Data Center, and other objective resources, the department should develop a non-duplicated Demographic Need Index Score that serves as a “proxy” for the number of individuals who are likely to use or need small urban transit services within an urban transit service area (i.e., individuals with disabilities, seniors, and/or low-income families). However, because the total square mileage and density of urban service areas differ so dramatically across the state, we would propose adding a Density Score to the Need Index, as well, which would serve as an indicator of the degree of population density within the service area.

Performance Measures and Guidelines (Assigned Weight: 35 percent)

The commission should identify and clarify the customer service priorities, operational benchmarks, and performance measures it will expect of those small urban operators who receive state funds. Once identified, the department – working with both operators, advocates, and consumers – should develop “best practice measurements” that align these priorities and expectations with data that can be generated and captured to gauge urban operator performance. Categories of measures could include customer service measures (e.g., on-time pick-up, drop-off, customer satisfaction measures); community impact measures (e.g., air quality, environmental impacts, economic development tied to transit services, etc.); compliance with legislative priorities (e.g., additional innovations in coordinating health and human services regional transportation planning cost-effectively, etc.); operational performance (e.g., cost per mile, scheduled maintenance, etc.); and local support (e.g., in-kind and/or cash supports provided by urban local governments to support, extend, or enhance transit, including infrastructure investments such as sidewalks, shelters, etc., with differences in taxing capacity factored). Specific measures that respond to systems that confront special trip/population generators, such as large populations of students, commuters, and/or trans-border customers, could be provided with specific measures and benchmarks that capture their performance in serving these populations efficiently and/or effectively while flexibly adopting to the special demands placed on their systems.

Because systems differ dramatically in their capacity, expertise, community challenges, and size, performance benchmarks should be developed for each individual system as part of their annual contract development. Not only will such benchmarks accommodate systems of diverse size, organizational maturity, and status, the department will be able to effectively challenge each system to improve in terms that are relevant and meaningful to the communities and customers they serve, rather than assume a uniformity that does not exist.

Funding adjustments should be based on performance trends that use either three-year averaging or the best performance in two of three years as a method for controlling for year-to-year fluctuations. Three-year increments should also serve as the period during which adjustments to benchmarks can be set and continued progress measured and achieved.

Performance Measures and Guidelines During Transition: In the first three years of this transition, the department will need not only to devise uniform performance measures, but some systems may need to revise and shift data collection to compile precisely what the department is requesting. As a consequence, we would propose that while the measures are being constructed,

accurate, measurement-responsive data is being compiled, and regional service planning is underway for health and human services transportation, that the department use only the Demographic Need – Density Index Score to guide its allocations. During this period, that portion of funds that will, post-transition, be distributed based on performance measures can be used to soften transition to a need-based, customer-service focused distribution. The current 10 percent set-aside of commission funds would be included and incorporated to add additional resources.

Additional Considerations

While we believe that an equitable distribution of funds, based on need, geographic accommodation, and compliance with performance measures will significantly enhance the availability of transit and the quality of these services in the long-term, we anticipate that the state will need to provide additional funds for investment given demographic projections, current unmet demand, the emergence of new systems, capital replacement, and other capital investments, such as rail. Unfortunately, because not every community will have the resources to fund these investments, we would encourage the commission to move forward with initiatives that would allow for the use of toll credits and the resources of the Texas Mobility Fund in communities where local revenues are insufficient for federal match requirements.

Further, we would urge the commission and the department to continue to pursue a policy of “listening” as the funding formula revisions and integration of health and human services transportation progresses. The department and commission should remain alert and attentive for the emergence of unintended consequences created as a result of decisions made by the commission on funding and/or health and human services transportation, the reauthorization of the federal transportation legislation, and other events. To quote the current Secretary of Defense, while the commission and department can respond to “those things that they know that they know,” the commission must preserve institutionally the latitude and flexibility to absorb and accommodate the emergence of “those things that (the commission/department) do not know that they do not know.” Armed with such flexibility, we believe that the state, its communities, transit’s customers, and the state’s taxpayers can benefit from the full yield of the commission’s investment of state funds.

Public Participation

In an ideal world, the revision of the funding formula and the integration of health and human services transportation would have proceeded hand-in-hand. However, given that this tandem process did not occur, the commission and department have the opportunity to learn from the challenges presented during this initial funding revision process. To that end, we would encourage the department to increase dramatically its advance preparation, logistical sensitivity, and the mechanisms for inclusion that characterizes its future processes. From our perspective, the department provided a minimal period of time to advocates and consumers to prepare for and notify other interested parties of the video teleconference, as well as the listening sessions. Given the importance of these issues, we would urge the department to provide significantly more advance time in its preparations for the next phase of work.

Similarly, the department needs significant improvement in its logistical sensitivity and inclusion as it moves forward. Complicating the short notice that the department provided to the public, participation in the video teleconference was only available to those individuals who could access the department's district offices between 5:30 – 7:30 on a weekday evening. Based on calls that we placed to transit agencies and/or local governments serving these sites, the majority of sites were not accessible by either fixed-route or paratransit services at the time/date of the teleconference. (See Attachment B) Similarly, the listening session sites were not wholly accessible by transit. While we appreciated the other methods the department devised to provide citizens with the opportunity to provide comments (e.g., the Website, a mailing address, etc.), the department must be significantly more sensitive to the current limits on transit systems and therefore, the transportation of those who rely on transit if it truly hopes to gather the input of those who are directly affected and have meaningful insight into the performance of existing systems.

Endnotes

¹ It bears mentioning that while the circumstances, logistical complications, and/or challenges associated with the mobility of our partners is often compelling and hard-won, we are reminded – nearly without exception – that they consider themselves among the fortunate. As many cited in their testimony to the department, they are too often familiar with those who are unable to take a stand and/or to participate in this discussion (or their communities) in the absence of a seat. Because of available operating funds, extremely limited hours of operation, strictly-defined service area boundaries, service costs, and/or other operational restrictions, what services exist are often inaccessible, inconvenient, unaffordable, and/or irrelevant in their efforts to meet their mobility needs.

² HB 3588, § 461.001: Legislative Intent and Construction.

³ HB 3588, § 461.007: Incentives for Efficiency.

⁴ While we do not support the specifics of this proposal, the funding would have been allocated differently (65 percent – 35 percent, nonurban to small urban) and would have rewarded performance.

Conclusion

In closing, we appreciate the opportunity to provide this input to the department and to the commission. We look forward to continuing to work with you collaboratively on these important issues.

BEAUMONT DISTRICT

Attendees

Paul Brown, City of Port Arthur
Jeff King, Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission
Bridgett Hlavinka, Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission
Lynn Babin, TxDOT Beaumont District

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the Beaumont District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None

Comments Received Via the Internet

None

BROWNWOOD DISTRICT

Attendees

Carole Warlick, Hill Country Transit District
Robert Kolls, TxDOT Brownwood District
Jeff Premiss, TxDOT Brownwood District
Jennifer Budney, Central Texas Rural Transit District
Jon Guajardo, Central Texas Rural Transit District
Tamara Cope, TxDOT Brownwood District
Bill Crumley, TxDOT Brownwood District
Sandra Parker, TxDOT Brownwood District

Speaker Comments

Carole Warlick, General Manager, Hill Country Transit District

The Hill Country Transit District operates both rural and small urban services. I appreciate this opportunity to offer the following recommendations to TxDOT.

TxDOT should hold harmless rural and small urban transit agencies at the current funding level as health and human service clients and funding is being transferred into TxDOT, and thus avoid a disruption in transit services. I would also like to see an increase in the health and human service transportation funds for transit systems that are now considered under-funded. TxDOT should develop and establish level-of-service expectations for transit systems to achieve in the provision of services to all passengers. The establishment of these level of service expectations should be a collaborative approach between TxDOT, TTA, and the transit agencies.

Funding should not be disrupted. I would like to urge that TxDOT allow an appropriate amount of time for systems to review formulas and to provide time to restructure the formula so that transit systems and their customers are not adversely affected.

Comment Forms Received

None

Comments Received Via the Internet

None

BRYAN DISTRICT

Attendees

John McBeth, Brazos Transit District
Michael Parks, Brazos Valley Council of Governments
Ronnie Gipson, Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging
Brian Wood, TxDOT Bryan District
Robert Appleton, TxDOT Bryan District
Darla Walton, TxDOT Bryan District

Speaker Comments

John McBeth, General Manager and CEO, Brazos Transit District

As I have been involved in the rural and small urban public transit industry for the past 26 years, I think I am in a position to comment on the direction the funding formula should take.

I will start by strongly recommending that before a formula is even proposed that the department determine what the goal of that formula should be. What is the result that we wish to achieve for all Texans relative to public transit? If we do not articulate what or where we want to get to, the result is going to be a road that meanders here and there and ends up nowhere we or our customers want to be.

At the District, our goals have always been to provide the highest quality and quantity of transit service to everyone with the resources available. We have built one system for everyone. Not a system for social service clients, not a system for the disabled, but one system for everyone.

I recommend that as a first step TxDOT adopt the following goals. First, the formula should result in a general public system that serves everyone regardless of who is paying for their trip. Second, the formula should increase funding to all systems by integrating the human services fund available to TxDOT through HB 3588 into the existing rural and small urban and public transportation network. Third, no existing city system should be losing funding. Past formula proposals have been predicated on the fact that older systems lose funding in order to increase funding the newer system. Why should my patrons, the taxpayers of the region I serve, be penalized because we have been in business longer than anybody else? It does not make any sense. Finally, a financial incentive bonus program should be established to reward systems like ourselves and many others in the state which have successfully coordinated with other entities to

pool resources in order to access mobility across their region. This bonus could be in the nature of extra funding or toll road credits to match our cap program.

I really appreciate the time you have taken and thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

Comment Forms Received

No Name Given, Bryan/College Station, Brazos County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation

- Performance and not longevity.
- New starts establishment.

Addressing local needs via customer satisfaction survey. Community input on the systems ability to address identified transit/mobility needs of the community.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The cost of rural public transportation in our rural areas is too high. Our rural economically disadvantaged, low-income, minority, and elderly populations cannot afford to use the existing available public transportation systems. The systems are available but they are not accessible due to cost and the lack of funding to offset the cost of operations. Low funding limits the transit systems from operating efficiently in rural areas of our region. The design of our transit system does not meet the needs of our rural transit poor population.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None

CHILDRESS DISTRICT

Attendees

Tony Cummins, TxDOT Childress District
Jackie Taylor, TxDOT Childress District
Danny Brown, TxDOT Childress District
Bob Watson, Clarendon EDC
Lezlie Carroll, Rolling Plains Management Corporation
Jerry Cummins, City of Childress
Jim Roberts, City of Clarendon
Lyll Foster, County

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the Childress District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None

Comments Received Via the Internet

None

CORPUS CHRISTI DISTRICT

Attendees

Anna Simo, Bee County Action Agency Rural Transit District
Eloy Soza, AARP
B.P. Voya, Bee County Action Agency Rural Transit District
G. Rodriguez, Bee County Action Agency Rural Transit District
Rick Smith, KORO-TV, Channel 28
Judy Telge, Accessible Communities, Inc.
Cliff Best, TxDOT
Richard Bullock, Coastal Bend Council of Governments

Speaker Comments

Anna Simo, Executive Director, Bee Community Action Agency Rural Transit District

We cover Aransas, Bee, Live Oak, Frio, and McMullen counties. I have two very brief comments. I would hope that the department considers a funding formula that would not adversely affect the current providers' basic service and, specifically, would not reduce the current levels of funding. With regard to health and human services transportation, I firmly believe that those funding dollars should go directly to public transportation providers since we have been in the business of providing transportation services for over 20 years. We have the experience and we are ready to provide that needed service. Thank you very much.

Eloy Soza, Mobility Specialist, AARP

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the formula. I would suggest TxDOT take the input collected from across the state and develop a short-term, transitional funding. A more comprehensive series of meetings and input from different groups is needed to develop a long-term formula. The formula should reward agencies and providers based on performance. It should consider not just customer funding levels, but it should be directly tied into the number of people served. We have an aging society and transportation is the biggest link to maintaining a person's quality of life.

In areas like Corpus Christi, which is basically the capital of South Texas, the formula should reward those transit providers that coordinate with larger urban transit providers. The formula should reflect those systems that coordinate services and travel to and from communities. Everybody's life in South Texas is sooner or later tied to Corpus Christi for either medical, work, educational, and recreation travel. Thank you very much.

Judy Telge, Executive Director, Accessible Communities, Inc.

I work with people with disabilities of all ages in Nueces County and the outlying areas. Mobility and transportation issues are obviously very important to the people we work with. Approximately 23 percent of our population are people with disabilities and public transportation

is literally a lifeline to the community for them. It is more than just medical transportation or to access to particular services in the community. It is basically a lifeline for them to be integrated and included in the community like everybody else.

It appears that with the health and human services transportation coordinating with public transportation there will be a lot less fragmentation of services. There should be a lot more coordination, which is something we support. The point is to make sure that consumer input is a valuable part of this entire process even though there will be a transitioning occurring. We do not want to see a reduction in existing service. We also want to make sure that the opportunities for consumer input are codified, if you will. It should not just be the policy makers that determine the direction of this new system. It should not just be the transportation providers. Consumers also must have input.

We have a saying in the disability community that it is “not about us without us.” We feel this is very appropriate. One final thing is if funding formulas are established then this may be a little bit out of this league, but there should be consideration of the fact that one of the barriers that continues to occur relative to impeding utilizing of public transportation is the physical barriers in many areas. Communities that do not have accessible routes to transportation, such as sidewalks, really do impede the ability of people with disabilities to use public transportation. Thank you very much for the comments and I hope this process continues in a positive direction.

Comment Forms Received

Eloy Soza, Corpus Christi, Texas

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Performance should be directly correlated to funding. All rural transit systems should build capacity and partnership, and collaboration should be rewarded. Partnership initiatives or collaborations between health and human services are needed.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The formula should reward progress toward goals, not simply continue historic funding levels. In communities where there are rural providers and urban providers traveling to and from adjacent areas, the formula should explicitly reward those systems that coordinate services to increase efficiencies and provide seamless trip services.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Gayle Knight, Corpus Christi, Nueces County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Funding allocation should not be based solely on population, as in rural south Texas the population is declining but the cost of transportation is increasing. It should be based on square miles somewhat, and mileage to urban areas. Most medical facilities are located in urban areas. The number of trips provided by transit systems should also be considered. Systems that are meeting the need would reflect more trips, thus should receive more funding for doing so.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Considerations should be given for coordination efforts. As there is a national push for improved coordination. Areas should be encouraged to coordinate and funding should be available to encourage coordination to continue or to start.

Anna Simo, Beeville, Bee County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. There are many key factors to consider when allocating funds for public transportation. They include general population and square miles of each county serviced. One key factor that should be considered is not to impose any funding reductions for current rural transportation operators.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Public transportation is a vital part of services provided in rural counties. Without public transportation, the elderly and persons with disabilities would not have access to public services or the medical attention necessary to sustain their lives. Public transportation also helps others who are economically disadvantaged or without personal means of transportation gain access to education, jobs, job training, and child care. Access through public transportation is vital for many low-income individuals in order to attain self-sufficiency and become productive members of society.

DALLAS DISTRICT

Tim Barneder, Community Transit Service
Omega Hawkins, KART (Terrell)
Pat P. Greever, CCART (McKinney)
Larry Campbell, City of Mesquite
Anthony Flowers, City of Grand Prairie, Grand Connection
Erica Lisberger, SPAN (Denton)
Anne Polk, TxDOT Dallas District
Eric Saxon, TxDOT Dallas District
Scott Dorset, TxDOT Dallas District
Ronda Schmidt, TxDOT Dallas District

Erica Lisberger, SPAN Coordinator of T Services

Our area started transportation some 30 years ago. We became a transit provider in 1988. From the very beginning we felt that coordination of transportation services was the key to provide everyone with access to services that they need. You do not duplicate basic infrastructure and vehicles when you coordinate. This approach has been a key for service in this area. However, geographic boundaries can be a problem with coordination.

SPAN currently services the rural area of Denton County. The problem is that our funding has decreased so we are not able to meet all the need in the area. Geographic boundaries can also be a problem when we find that many individuals that we use to transport are virtually without transportation.

We do what we can to help them out, but quite frankly there are no operating funds to do that. In that way we are really using private funds, donations, and everything that we can get to

help the situation. The outlying areas of our geographic boundaries are not being served, period. Residents in these areas need to go to dialysis treatments and hospitals, but there is just no transportation available.

I think it is very important that we coordinate the whole transit system so that everyone has an equal opportunity to access transit. The formula itself, I do not really have problem with the current approach. We need more operating funds to provide needed services. Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

Ted China, Mesquite, Dallas County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation

- Ridership/demand – use data submitted on NTD reports.
- Performance indicators – for example, cost effectiveness.
- Incentives – for example, alternative fuel vehicles used and commitment in non-attainment areas.
- Annual adjustment for population increases.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. No different than others. We would like, at a minimum, to have current funding levels maintained and not cut. Mesquite operates as a small urban demand-response service only to elderly and disabled residents.

Charles Lee, Rowlett, Dallas County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Since public transportation is a monopoly it should be driven by customer satisfaction. Reliability, long-term planning, similar to the method the PUC and FCC use to review utilities. A third party will assure a better feeling of fairness. This should be comprised of only public “appointed” members.

- The formula should be developed and should take into account ALL the items mentioned (distance, clients, qualified candidates, congestion, cost of living, etc.) and the data should come from a neutral/official source.
- Based on the formula, each qualifying group/area should be given a percentage rating that is based on their percentage of the total players.
- The total money available, however this factor is computed, should be distributed according to the percentage ratings. Not all of the money should be distributed. I suggest 10/15 percent be held back.
- Any group receiving more than a 10 percent reduction of money awarded last year should have their reduction spread over one-to-three years depending on the size of the cut.
- A public committee/commission of three citizens should be established. This committee should be augmented by one NON-VOTING representative from health and human services and one from TxDOT to advise and counsel.
- This committee should be responsible for hearing complaints/needs for additional funding and administering the money not distributed. They would also hear any

requests for increased funding year-by-year as the client base, geography, etc., changes.

- As the federal and state funding increases or decreases it will be the responsibility of this committee to ensure equity for ALL the players.
- It shall also be the responsibility of this committee, with help/advice from the non-voting members), to ensure that wholly dedicated federal funds are properly applied and we do not lose monies due to violation of the federal law.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None

Other Comments Received

Pat C. Greever, Director of Transportation, Collin County Area Regional Transportation

The following are direct quotes from documents available from the NCTCOG Website and AAA 2002-2003 needs assessments:

“North Central Texas has now averaged adding over 150,000 new persons per year for the past four years and this marks the seventh consecutive year to add over 100,000 persons. Recent economic uncertainty has not slowed down the remarkable pace at which the region continues to grow. Over 30 percent of the region’s growth in 2002 was provided by five cities. McKinney adding 8,650 new residents bringing the city’s total population to 73,550 persons. Frisco (55,400) adding 5,300. Some small cities continued to see big changes in the last year. The City of Anna (1,950) also increased their population by 50 percent as well by adding 650 new residents. The City of Celina (2,850) added 550 people, growing by 24 percent. Murphy (6,450), Melissa (1,700), Wylie (21,350), Royse City (4,100) and McKinney (73,550) each experienced at least a 13 percent increase in their population growth. Collin County added over 27,000 new persons last year and now contains 577,110.

County Population Growth		
County	2002 Population	Growth 1990 – 2002 (in percent)
Collin	566,798	115.7

Area Cities with 10,000 or More Residents		
City	2002 Population	Growth 1990 – 2002 (in percent)
McKinney	54,369	152.1
Allen	43,554	124.8
Frisco	33,714	417.3
Wylie	15,132	64.2

“Collin County is the most prosperous county in the region and, for that matter, in the state. Homelessness, poverty, and unemployment exist in Collin County and that hardship can affect anyone. There is a growing gap between educated and uneducated, skilled and unskilled, old and young, urban and rural, and rich and poor in the Dallas area.

Median household income of outlying Collin County is only 60 percent of the income level in suburban areas. The bottom line is that there are a growing number of individuals and families who do not have the resources for an acceptable quality of life. Among the factors that appear to contribute to the widening economic gap is the availability of transportation. Jobs are often in one area and those in need of employment in another with no easy connection between the two. There is a need to expand handicap-accessible and intra/inter-county transportation services for seniors to assure that they get to their employment, volunteer, and medical opportunities.

A priority of special concern for Collin County is to encourage programs that provide in-county and out-of-county transportation to medical and other appointments for seniors. Communities will be challenged to integrate and connect older adults to the community and to needed health and human services. On-going health needs of seniors remain great especially when a disability is involved. Mental health needs are often overlooked in the concern to address physical needs. Transportation within and across county lines is a critical issue particularly for those with a physical disability. There is a need to expand handicap-accessible and in-county transportation service for seniors to assure that they can get to their employment, volunteer, and medical opportunities.

The number of over-60 citizens in Collin County is expected to more than double by 2020.

	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population 45 Years & Older	29,024	20.1	58,780	22.3	127,401	25.9
Median Age/Years	28.3		30.0		32.9	

The explosive growth of Collin County is at hand now. The exponential increase of citizens over the age of 60 is at hand now. Transit agency efficiency and equity in reporting that efficiency may be subject to debate relative to formula modification. However, population “explosive growth” and the increasing age of that populace, is a fact in several areas of Texas. Additional credence in formula modification directed toward those rural and small urban transit agencies which serve that populace growth is only logical. Formulas based upon needs/requirements/availability of funding from the past year/biennium will result in decreased service in Collin County.”

EL PASO DISTRICT

Attendees

Rick Sowell, El Paso County
 Armida Sagaribay, TxDOT
 Mary Telles-Goins, TxDOT

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the El Paso District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None

Comments Received Via the Internet

Bob Geyer, El Paso, El Paso County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Present funding percentages should remain at 65 percent rural and 35 percent urban. The rural funding should be distributed based on two factors with an equal funding weight of 50 percent. Factors: 1) annual passengers per capita (based on past calendar year data) 2) annual total of scheduled vehicle miles per route X 365 operating days per year X 6 trips per day (based on past calendar year data).

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Factor #1 takes into account population and efficiency. Factor #2 takes into account the size of the area served and the amount of service actually provided.

FORT WORTH DISTRICT

Attendees

Vinsen Faris, Meals on Wheels, Johnson and Ellis Counties
Oscar Trevino, Mayor, City of North Richland Hills
Rena Peden, Parker County Transportation
Michelle Bloomer, North Central Texas Council of Governments
Mary Hobson, TxDOT Fort Worth District
Wayne La Cava, Parker County Transportation
Charles Akin, Parker County Transportation
Valentin Lopez, TxDOT Fort Worth District
Donna Fowler, TxDOT Fort Worth District
Shelley Terry, City of Cleburne
Juanita Bridges, City of Arlington
Paulette Hartman, City of North Richland Hills
Ron Parnell, City of Cleburne
Jonnie Campbell, REACH of Fort Worth
April Mitchell, Arlington Human Services Planning

Speaker Comments

Wayne La Cava, Parker County Transportation Service and Resident of Springtown

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I am a resident of Springtown, Texas, which is about 20 miles north of Weatherford in Parker County. I have been on the Board of Parker County Transportation since about 1983, about the time we got our first vehicles.

There are some things that we are concerned about that I would like to mention to you. Not necessarily in order of priority, but things that come to mind.

The funding formula should be based on several different things. First, the population in the area served. Secondly, the number of trips, number of riders that are served in that area, and the number of miles that are traveled to serve those people. We seem to be aware of some operations that cover perhaps a larger area than ours, but they do not have near the population to serve, the ridership, or trips. Yet, they receive more funding than we do.

Another issue is that funding should allow for the establishment of sub-bases of transportation where there is more than one concentrated area of population in the area served. For example, our service was based in Weatherford from 1983 on and it was only about three to five years ago that it was able to expand into the Springtown area. It was only a matter of a few months before there were four vehicles operating every day and they were being utilized all the time. The need for the transportation was there because of an elderly population. Many of these individuals needed to go to doctor appointments, for medical treatments and therapy, and for other activities. They had no other means of transportation.

In the case where there are needs for capital expenditures, those one-time capital expenditures should be just that. They should be expenditures to take care of a need to expand or provide a facility and not be figured into the formula on an ongoing basis. We seem to know of some cases where that has been an issue. There should be a way to figure into the formula the performance of the service that is being rendered and to re-evaluate that as issues change. It should not take 10 years to reevaluate a formula when the population, traffic patterns, and needs change.

Those are the items that we would like to bring to your attention. We thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in this session.

Ron Parnell, Cleburne/Johnson County Transportation Services

I have a couple of issues that I would like the commission to examine in their funding formula. I am excited that we are examining a formula that will help distribute funds within the state in a more balanced process.

One of the issues that I would like examined that I think some contractors do and some do not, and which I think would bring in more revenues, is that all contractors should charge fares to provide their services. I have heard stories that some are real poor counties and some are not, but I think we all face those issues of riders who lack funds to pay for service. Still, we all have to foot the bill to provide that transportation.

The other issue is to get more involvement from our cities and counties. I think we have all tried to stand out here on our own in looking for federal and state dollars. We need to get more help from the county and city tax bases. That should help to alleviate some of the funding burden and help us distribute more. Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

Juanita Bridges, Arlington, Texas

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation

- Availability of public transit and private service providers.
- Population.
- Percent of population disabled – level of unmet need/level of service.
- Percent of population elderly – level of unmet need/level of service.
- Performance measures should be incorporated as well as oversight activities such as annual or biannual program reviews – financial, performance, vehicle maintenance.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Current funding levels are not adequate to serve all the requests made to our system – paratransit. Funding does not increase as the cost of doing business increases. Funding from year-to-year should remain fairly consistent.

Jonnie Campbell, Mansfield, Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. This formula needs to be a transitional formula only. The formula should reward progress goals, not simply continued historic funding levels or even the achievement of static numerical objectives. In communities where there are rural and urban providers traveling to, from and around areas that are adjacent, the formula should explicitly reward those systems that coordinate services to increase efficiencies or collaborate to provide seamless transportation for customers. Where communities are pursuing or investing new funds in transit, communities should be rewarded. Transit agencies must agree to measure their performance and the cost efficiency of their services externally with customers and communities as the reference point.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Our agency provides services to people with disabilities. Very sadly, many people who desire and need our services, like those in Arlington, Mansfield, and Haltom City, cannot get to our office to receive the much needed services. Also, these people are often unable to work and are forced to live off their social security only because they cannot get to work. How sad is that when a person who has a significant disability can overcome their personal barriers in regard to their disability, but cannot overcome mobility – the ability to get to work. People have the right to attend church, shop, or seek out services or entertainment regardless of where they live – urban vs. rural. Our consumers need your help. They have overcome mountains; cannot you help them overcome this minor thing called transportation?

Wayne La Cava, Springtown, Parker County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Funding should take into account the population of the served area, the number of people served, the number of trips, etc. One-time capital expenditures should be just that – one-time expenditures and not rolled into an ongoing funding formula.

Charles Akin

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Fair to all agencies. Begin with a new base starting point, exclusive of one time capital expenditures. Formula should be based on performance and needs to establish those performance measures. The formula should not fund counties that are not being served.

No Name Listed, Johnson County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Population, land area to be served, number of passenger trips made (be sure each transit agency reports passenger trips the same way), and passenger trip cost. Establish a statewide average for all public transportation agencies to meet. Consider incentives for agencies that perform. Establish standard performance measures for all agencies to meet for incentive funds.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area

- Should not have a “hold harmless” clause in the formula.
- If no service is provided in a county claimed as part of the service area, it should not be calculated in part of the formula.
- Only in areas where there is service.
- The Medicaid dollars should be contracted to urban and rural transit districts, but ensure they provide the service not just pad their budget.
- Continue to seek input from transit industry, TxDOT districts, and stakeholders.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Casey Duck-Garcia, Fort Worth, Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The development of public transportation options between cities and counties.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Specifically, in the D/FW Metroplex, public transportation is needed within Tarrant county so persons who live in one city are not limited to transportation options which keep them from traveling to nearby cities such as Arlington. I work with the developmentally disabled population in Arlington who does not have the option of driving, relies on Handitran which is arranged by appointment only and is limited to service providers in Arlington which are not nearly as extensive as those available in nearby Fort Worth to which they have no access.

Leah King, Fort Worth, Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. Opportunity for economic improvement. That is, the opportunity to live in one city and travel to another for purposes of employment.
2. Opportunity for socialization or entertainment. One should not be bound to their “block” due to the lack of public transportation. Each person should have the opportunity to participate in events when and where they choose.

3. Remembering that those with physical or developmental disabilities should not be left out of the plans.

All of the above suggestions positively impact the community at large financially, by attracting tourists, and by improving the quality of life for everyone.

Leslie James, Hurst, Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Central access, adequate parking, affordable rates, and availability for those with disabilities.

HOUSTON DISTRICT

Attendees

Tony Cusa, Houston Center for Independent Living
Robert Andrew, American Red Cross
Linda Harris, Fort Bend County
Eddie Hoagland, Brazos Transit District
Fern Ballou, Texas Commission for the Blind
James Patterson, Fort Bend County
Paulette Shelton, Gulf Coast Center Connect Transit
David Jones, Gulf Coast Center Connect Transit
Leigh Ann Shingle, Brazoria County Center and Living
Mary Neeper, Fort Bend County Center for Independent Living
Ann Werlein, Fort Bend County
Jean McCarver, Fort Bend County
Cynthia King, Fort Bend County
Gilbert Paul, Brazoria Center for Independent Living
Ricky Broussard, Brazoria County
Susan Berkley, Connect Coordinating Council
Richard Brewster, Alvin, Texas
Lucy Lapaglia, TxDOT Houston District
Pam Hasker, TxDOT Houston District

Speaker Comments

James Patterson, Fort Bend County Commissioner

Fort Bend County is located on the southwest side of Houston and is one of the fastest growing counties in Texas with a current population of some 400,000. However, at this time we do not have a public transportation system that is funded through any state or federal funds.

The current formula does not appear to include any start-up money. The previous speaker addressed that fact that counties need to be involved. Our county is spending in excess of \$500,000 on transportation-related activities. But we need start-up funds to coordinate what we are doing. We are spending a very large amount of money to build two toll roads in our county and we would like to see toll road credits approved for transit projects.

The current formula as we see it penalizes Fort Bend County for being tied to the greater Houston area. Currently we are not able to access either state support or collect a local sales tax because the METRO service area includes two small areas in Fort Bend County. We need to be able to access state support for the whole county so that we can have coordinated transportation services. As the previous speaker said, we need state support so we can serve all parts of our community, whether it be the elderly, the handicapped, or just the normal person that needs a ride. Thank you.

Richard Brewster, Citizen, Alvin, Texas

What I would like to see is for people with disabilities to be more included in the process of developing a new formula. I am from the Alvin area and I use our transit system more than most people. I use it almost everyday because I travel around a lot and I would just like to see more people with disabilities more involved with the formula discussion. Thank you very much.

Susan Berkley, Gulf Coast Transportation Coordination Council

My name is Susan Berkley. I live in Alvin in Brazoria County. I use Connect Transit and I am on the Gulf Coast Transportation Coordination Council. I appreciate the opportunity to provide information to the department through this teleconference. I would to read the letter that I received from the department regarding this teleconference:

“Your input in this process is critical to assist in developing state and federal formulas used to allocate funding for public transportation in rural and small urban areas of the state. All users of public transportation in Texas are encouraged to express comments on this topic.” Although I assume only the best of intentions, the briefing materials that the department provided were “lost in translation” for many consumers who rely on these services for transportation. While to a transportation expert, the diagram “Current Rural and Urban Area Public Transportation Funding Process” and the narrative make sense. However, to a person whose life will be directly impacted by the funding formulas the commission makes, they are less than clear. If all users are indeed encouraged to express comments we need to be able to be given information that is understandable to make informed comments.

Complicating matters, the materials were presented in a vacuum and without context. For example, although the department identifies that it splits the money 50/50 between rural and small urban systems, the amount of funding that each specific transit system receives does not accompany the briefing materials the department provided. For example, there is no breakdown showing elderly, disabled, and households without vehicles, so therefore, there is no information provided as to whom the consumers are, where they live, and whether in fact they are being served.

There are many people in rural areas that still do not receive transportation services and for those that do have transportation; it is often time-limited. People in rural areas are left out of the mix. I also want recognition in the formula for elderly, disabled, and households without vehicles.

The focus in the new funding formula should be focused instead on the consumers and communities who rely on those services, not simply the funds.

The department should develop measures that reward systems that provide high-quality consumer services, that aggressively seek partnerships to stretch available resources and yet still cost effectively provide transportation to residents, and those that innovate to increase satisfaction.

As a frequent rider, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I also look forward to responding to the department in greater detail in written and on-line comments. Thank you.

Tony Cusas, Coalition for Barrier-Free Living

We operate the Houston Center for Independent Living. We provide services to people with disabilities. We also have two satellites, one in Brazoria County that is in an extremely rural area and a brand new facility in Fort Bend County, which will be opening very shortly in Sugar Land.

In each of these counties, we recognize that people with disabilities are frequently left out of the equation for transportation, and as has been noted, very little consumer input has been sought for this group. We would recommend that if you were going to tie-in performance rewards, that the systems or the rural transit district provide opportunities for consumer input in design of the routes, hours of operation, and the frequency of the operation. Rewards might be provided if their systems or the transit districts have actual coordinated efforts between non-profits and fixed route systems or that the health and human service dollars transition. This can be evidenced by common reading or dispatching, training the mechanics or drivers, common purchase of the equipment or insurance. By doing this it will change the way that the transportation is actually delivered. The reason why it is so important to us as the USDOT noted that people with disabilities are the most transit-dependent in the U.S. More than 30 percent of them have no access to a vehicle. That is why this is so important. We wish you well and wish to work with you.

Comment Forms Received

None

Comments Received Via the Internet

Dr. Dianne Wilson, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. Lack of current public transportation in the county taking into account the entire county and not just one small portion.
2. Public demand and needs especially for the elderly, disabled, and others unable to drive a vehicle.
3. Willingness of cities, the county and various agencies to form a cooperative effort in achieving a public transportation network.

4. So much money goes to Houston which certainly benefits Fort Bend County but none of that money provides public transportation outside of Houston and Missouri City (only city in the county whose residents pay MTA tax).
5. Funds should be allocated to bring public transportation to growing, high demand counties who are without such service.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. There is no public transportation in our area except that provided by various state agencies to target riders such as Red Cross, Senior Citizens, and Texana MHMR. Fort Bend is a growing, dynamic county that has been forgotten by public transportation and funding for same because of its proximity to the City of Houston.

Julie Gosch, Missouri City, Fort Bend County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I am not sure what this question is asking. Maybe some choices to prioritize would be effective instead of this anecdotal framework. I will try to answer: When we look at funding public transportation, I think we should consider the rate of population growth, and as a result, rate of need increasing.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Vehicles, training, and flexible routes are critical to Fort Bend County.

No Name Provided, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Safely transporting people with disabilities should be key.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None.

Craig St. Martin, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. To provide transportation for the working disabled in our community who want to work, but have no way to get to jobs. The basic ability to drive that so many of us take for granted severely limits the working disabled from seeking even the most basic jobs. Their self confidence, personal image, and ability to contribute to their community is impaired. By just having a way to get to work and out into the community we gain a productive, grateful, tax paying citizen. In larger metro cities where subways, trains, even the basic bus systems meet the needs of the working disabled I have seen great contributions made by acquaintances, friends and family. Secondly, the quality of life through the alleviation of stressful overcrowded roadways and the pollution that is created by the proliferation of traffic.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. My daughter is one of the working disabled. She recently had to give up her job that she had for almost two years because of a cutback in hours and the agency that she works with, Texana, could not meet her needs because their resources have been stretched to the max. She enjoyed her work at the daycare center, but time and availability of transportation made it impossible for her to get there. There is no public transport in our Fort Bend community to get the working disabled or other

workers to their jobs. It breaks my heart for her to have loved her job so much and now to be looking for another job that she might walk to or ride her bike to for 3-5 miles. That just is not right. Help please.

No Name Provided, Hempstead, Waller County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Keeping the current funding for all existing transportation systems to prevent loss of existing service. Look for other available funds to help expand service (existing transit and areas without service) for the entire state of Texas.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Perhaps a rural transportation tax would address permanent funding rather than depending on just the traditional sources. We need more service not less transportation service.

Other Comments Received

Susan Berkeley

My name is Susan Berkeley and I attended the February 10 videoconference for TxDOT at the Houston office. I am a person who uses a wheelchair and also someone who rides Connect Transit in Brazoria County. I came to this meeting to give public testimony on issues surrounding the federal formula and how people with disabilities need not be left out of the new formula created. If anything we need to be at the forefront.

When I arrived I was greeted with an environment that was accessible at a minimum. While the Videoconference Center is housed behind the main offices, there was poor access once inside the facility. There was a ramp, but once inside we were forced to sit in the back of the conference room. There were chairs blocking both sides of the room. Three other people with disabilities were also there and all of them were unable to sit any closer than the very back of this room.

Also, there was a bathroom in the building, but it was not ADA compliant. I did not go inside the room where the bathroom was, however the doorway was obviously too narrow for a person in a chair to pass through. One person did need to use the facilities and the van that brought him had to take him back to the main building to use the restroom. It is outrageous that in this day and age when audio/video capabilities can bring people together, that we still cannot provide the basic of services at public places. TxDOT has a responsibility to make its facilities compliant and user friendly.

Beverly Moore

I was not able to attend the public meeting regarding public transportation needs in Fort Bend County. I would like to make the following comments. Fort Bend County is one of the fastest growing in the country and receiving a good bit of publicity. We have been told to be proud of all the planned places for us to enjoy. We are to be proud of the high dollar single-family residences. For Bend County is huge. It is spread all over the place. Families who would hire domestic help cannot – no transportation. Travelers who would rather not tackle the madness of airport parking during trips had better do so or spend \$100+ on cab fare – no public

transportation. As a Board member of the ARC of Fort Bend County, a parent, and a teacher, I advocate for persons in Fort Bend County with disabilities. We have a large base of support among our residents and businesses. Many would supply jobs for our trained individuals, but – no public transportation. Car in the repair shop in Fort Bend County? We have to rent a car (and make sure it is a company that will come and pick us up) – no public transportation. Unless, of course, the DOT is assuming we all have constant two-car situations. Any resolution to this situation is moving slower than molasses with no end in sight. What do we have to do? I believe it is next to a public crime to plan communities and not require a plan to accommodate necessary travel for individuals who would live in those communities.

LAREDO DISTRICT

Attendees

Mike Graham, TxDOT Laredo District
Omar Cantu, TxDOT Laredo District
Tom Lucek, El Metro
Robert J. Garza, El Metro
Robert Godson, Laredo Transit

Speaker Comments

Tom Lucek, El Metro

We feel that the funding formula should take into account both issues that are fair, like a fair share to be made available, and also those that would encourage increasing transportation or more productive, efficient transportation, incentives, motivation.

If you were to take money available and split it up into six categories the first six that would be fair from our point of view would be:

- Passengers. For instance if transit system X had two percent of all passengers among all the small urban areas then they would get two percent of funding in this category.
- Passenger miles. Since this measure is an indication that you are helping environment and air quality that the longer trips are taking people out of cars and you are saving gas, so we feel there should be an incentive for recognition of passenger miles.
- Revenue vehicle hours, which is an indication of service.
- Revenue vehicle miles, which is another indication of service.
- Population, that is a fair indicator.
- Taxes generated. When Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison was here in about two months ago, she noted that the new federal legislation should give Texas more recognition and a better return on its dollar. We currently are a donor state. We only get 90 cents on a dollar back and maybe there should be some recognition of taxes generated in these small communities. Where this money is coming from and if you are generating 10 percent of it you should get 10 percent back.
- Performance.

As transit systems become more efficient and productive, indicators like the passenger miles traveled per revenue vehicle mile or passenger miles traveled per revenue vehicle hour

might be appropriate. These are indicators how efficient a transit system could be. Other indicators would be vehicle revenue miles per capita, vehicle revenue hours per capita, passenger miles per capita, or passengers per capita. Those are six ratios or productivity factors that could be examined. In fact those six factors come out of the American Public Transit Association's recommendations for the reauthorization of the TEA-21 that was done as a national coalition back in September 2002. There as been a lot of legislative efforts and some people have lost track of the work that went into developing the initial recommendation. There was one reference in there that FTA is already studying some of these formulas and so it might be worth tying into what's going to happen at the federal level.

Robert Godson, Laredo Transit

My comments are quite simple. I think most transit systems want to see a formula that is performance-based and that is based on a plan.

We have a great demand here in South Texas. We have over 4 million passengers annually and we continue to grow. We have a very aggressive compressed natural gas alternative fuel program for South Texas that we are quite proud of and we would like to see this continue. The demand here as far as our passengers is great. A lot of our passengers are very low income people who are dependant upon the transit system and walk several blocks just to get on our system and utilize it. Whether that be on the bus or our paratransit system. We have a lot of individuals that use our paratransit system, with over 50,000 passengers annually. We have overcrowding on many buses, which puts a real damper on our equipment.

We have had to increase training for our personnel because in Laredo it is so far from the other areas. It takes two hours to get from here to San Antonio and two hours from here to Corpus Christi. We do not have some of the resources that these other cities have available. We have had to increase training, which has increased costs in our operation.

Basically, my comments are to keep in mind the demand. The people of our area utilize this system and are in desperate need of transit.

Comment Forms Received

Robert Martinez, Jr., Laredo, Webb County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. There are many key factors to take into consideration, one would be ridership, the second would be to take into consideration the miles we put into each vehicle within our own county. On a typical day a bus in Webb County travels 305 miles a day and that is just one side of the county.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None Received

LUBBOCK DISTRICT

Attendees

Jim Adams, Caprock Community Action

Claudia Cowley, Caprock Community Action
Rhonda Thornhill, Caprock Community Action
Dallas Brewer, South Plains Community Action
Neta Hickman, Caprock Community Action
Maria Regalado, CapTrans
Bessie Jones, CapTrans
Beverly Ham, Texas Department of Health
Mike Sanchez
Brian Baker, South Plains Community Action
Manuel Gonzales, South Plains Community Action
James St. Clair, Cochran County
Dick Van Hoove
Melinda Harvey, Citibus
Janie Corrales, SPARTAN
Mary Adams, South Plains Community Action
Bill Powell, South Plains Community Action
E. Mache, Lamb County
Susan Poss, Texas Commission for the Blind
Cindy Finley, South Plains Transportation Alliance
Neil Finley, South Plains Transportation Alliance
Denette Sweeney, Advocacy, Inc.
Edward Sweeney, Advocacy, Inc.
Sandy Ramirez
Bill Hardin
Irma Guerra, South Plains Community Action
Sue Ann Hansford, Texas Commission for the Blind
Sylvia G. Hudson
Woodie McArthur, Dickens County
Rudy Rangel, Lubbock Dialysis Center
Lynn Castle, TxDOT Lubbock District

Speaker Comments

Judge Dallas Brewer, South Plains Community Action

I have been a judge for 17 years and I am also on the Board of South Plains Community Action, which serves 10 counties in this area. SPARTAN Transportation travels over 1 million miles per year. I have a couple of comments on the funding process.

We would suggest that you eliminate the 10 percent commission selected projects and use those funds for rural and small urban systems.

I want to stress how important SPARTAN Transportation is to Yoakum County. In Yoakum County we have the Family Literacy and Career Center Program to help meet the needs of families in our remote rural areas. I drove 85 miles to get here to this meeting today. The program provides daily adult education in the areas of GED preparation, English as a second language, citizenship, computer programs, computer job training, and college preparatory classes to individuals in Yoakum County. The program also helps clients become full partners in the education of their children. Clients have assisted in helping their children reach their full

potential as learners. Early childhood education classes are available during the same hours that parents attend classes. These classes are not babysitting, but development, appropriate activities taught by well trained staff. Most of the families that attend a leadership program are not able financially to drive to the other town in our county daily to receive services. During the 2003-2004 school year, 16 adults and children have used SPARTAN to get to these activities.

Rudy Rangel, Lubbock Dialysis Center

We have three dialysis centers. Commissioner Ric Williams mentioned that Texas is big. This area is big also. We have a huge area and we could just not do without a rural transportation program. We have approximately four or five patients that use the SPARTAN Transportation Program. We have several more who use the West Texas Opportunities service and then we have patients on the Caprock Community Action that use it also.

Our dialysis patients are elderly, disabled, and most of them are low-income. It is vital for them to have this transportation system. Dialysis is a life and death matter. If they do not come to dialysis they will die. We have patients as far as Snyder, some 85 miles away. I have Mr. Jackson here with me that travels and he can tell you that it is bad enough to be on dialysis but to have to travel that far is very stressful.

I urge you to continue the current funding levels to meet this very real need that we have in the Lubbock area. Thank you.

Sandy Ramirez, Student

Ladies and Gentlemen of Lubbock, TxDOT, and Texas Workforce Commission staff thank you for allowing me to be there. I am a staff program support writer and also a part-time student. I am also a full-time mother of three. I believe I represent whoever rides on public transportation.

I am here to voice my concerns toward rural funding for transportation. I would like to tell you about what rural transportation has done for me. I am now completing a one-year program in the medical support field. I made the president's list for the last two semesters. SPARTAN Transportation has allowed me to go school four times a week and finish my medical transcription certification program. With God's help, I hope to graduate in May of this year. I can tell you first hand as a rider the role public transportation has played for the elderly, the sick, and the handicapped. It makes a positive different in these people's lives. Even the excellent and dedicated drivers that I talk to say public transportation is important. I'm not very familiar with all the logistics concerning public transportation, but according to Tom in East Texas, I agree with him 100 percent. I can say that I speak on behalf of a lot of people who go to school and have to get a hold of SPARTAN Transportation. Please allow others who are willing to put forth the time and effort to go back to school to use the public transportation system. Thank you.

Mary Adams, South Plains Community Action Association

I am also a member of the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council. I would like you to know that public transportation has been a significant service for people with traumatic brain injuries.

I work primarily with adults with disabilities who are usually pretty much low-income adults. These people are trying to live independently in their rural communities. Most of my participants cannot drive and they have to rely on public transportation to access the vital medical services they need. To have employment, most are young adults who want to go to work and if they cannot get public transportation at the hours they need, it limits their job opportunities.

They also need the transportation for socializing and integrating into the community. Public transportation services are scarce and sometime non-existing in the rural towns. I think they have a pretty good transportation system in Lubbock but it requires a lot of planning ahead to meet their scheduling needs. I would request that your funding levels in rural areas be maintained where they are now at least and that you are very careful not to adversely affect the ability of the rural public transportation providers to accommodate the individual needs with people with disabilities. I would like to reiterate some of the comments from previous speakers that it is vital to continue to seek the input of people with disabilities in planning the public transportation system. Thank you.

James St. Clair, Cochran County

Cochran County is a rural county with an area of 900 square miles and population of 3,730. Forty percent of our population is below the poverty income level. Another large group of our population are senior citizens. Both groups require and need rural public transportation. A rural county is very limited in resources. This is the only resource we have for public transportation. I support a funding formula that considers geographic area, mileage, and lack of population density. Any performance-based plan will favor urban areas simply because of the density of the population. I recommend discontinuing the commission's selected projects. I support a formula that is 65 percent rural and 35 percent small urban cities. Thank you.

Sonya Hubbard, Services

I would like to remind you again of the great need for families with small children to access transportation. It is often a multiple challenge just because there is more than one rider involved. Please do not forget families with small children. Again, the term rural area highlights the exact issues that we deal with daily. That of geography and of population. In conjunction with, I would like to ask TxDOT to consider adding a route to their last poor West Texas area that doesn't seem to be accessed now. Thank you.

Woodie McArthur, Dickens County Judge

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I am the county judge of small rural county and also a board of director members of the Caprock Community Action Group, which furnishes transportation, and I'm also President of the local Council of Governments, which has 15 members.

Dickens County is small rural county or disadvantaged county in which you are 65 to 75 miles, depending on what side of the country you are on from a hospital. We have large minority group that needs this service that is provided. I think this is the third time that I have spoken before a commission because we have been bombarded with cuts in our funding at the rural

level. It concerns me that being a disadvantaged county we are not going to have a way to come up with a lot of the programs that we are being ask to cut. Like our good friends in Concho County we are a declining populated area that has an aging population that is getting older and older and we ask that you consider the funding that is in this rural area. Like my predecessors, we asking for 65/35 and do away with the selected projects. More importantly, you need to remember that in West Texas we are having a lot of problems out there. The urban areas are having their problems and it is affecting us because we do not have the pool that we use to have. So, when you are doing this please consider us out here in West Texas. Thank you.

Brian Baker, SPARTAN

I administer a transportation assistance program at Jobs Access for low-income adults with minor children in the home. People are eligible if they are going to work or school; and are in a certain income level. This program serves close to 130 people a month. The majority of the transportation services are dedicated to the residents of a very rural population surrounding Lubbock.

Lubbock is kind of like Tyler. It serves as a hub to a very rural population of West Texas that surrounds it. Not only do people use the transportation for hospitals and medical services, but for jobs. Residents of rural West Texas deserve to be able to maintain their way of life and transit is key to folks being able to do that. The funding level that you propose, the 50/50 is not exactly set in stone. Its been 65/35 and it could be that again. Appreciate you letting me be here. Thank you.

Randy Hoffman, TxDOT District Engineer

I just want to make a very brief comment. First, I think you can tell from the view from your camera that we have a full room here tonight. We have 40 or more people who have come to join in the meeting. I really want to commend our people for taking the time out of their busy, personal schedules and time away from their families to come out and participate in this videoconference. You can also tell from all the participants and the people that got up and made comments that this is a very serious issue here in the Lubbock area and in this part of the state. Again, I want to commend everybody for coming out and thank you very much. With that I think we will wrap up the comments from the Lubbock District. Thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity for videoconference and for participating in this important issue.

Comment Forms Received

Amalia Martinez, Littlefield, Lamb County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The key factor should not be based on population. The key factors should be based on the number of elderly, youth, poor, and Medicaid recipients/participants. These groups are the target population for public transit. An allocation by total population will eliminate funds in the rural, sparsely populated areas where unemployment is high and per capita income is low.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The number of people being served in this area should clearly show the increasing need for transportation funds. Comments by residents who do not know the full story of SPARTAN ask about it because the

buses are constantly visible on the highways and bring attention to the numbers of people being served and comment on the fact that this is a great service to our communities. Please consider an increase in funding.

Alex Wall, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. First, I believe and consider this transportation to be a blessing, especially for these less fortunate who for various reasons do not have transportation of their own to get to and from places they need, and I say need to get. Also, I believe that transportation is essential to some. This is why I believe it should continue to be funded.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I believe there should be a special transportation bus to carry the ones who are on dialysis to get them to and from the dialysis center and not have them to sit and wait for the ones who were transported for other reasons as the ones who were on dialysis are very tired and weak and need to get home and rest.

Sandy Ramirez, Lubbock, Hockley County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation

- Location (rural area).
- Lack of personal transportation.
- Elderly, student, or indigent riders.
- High gas prices.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area.

- Less pollution in our atmosphere.
- Safe riding.

Maria Avalos, Petersburg, Hale County (Comments Received in Spanish and Translated)

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Same as is currently done.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. It is very important for me to go to the doctor or take my children because I do not drive and my husband is working and he cannot take me to the appointments.

Norma Jean Stevenson, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. More drivers so that Cap Trans can go to Plainview every day. I attend Wayland Baptist University. I am a full-time student. I had to drop a needed Math class because Cap Trans only goes to Plainview on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The class is only on Tuesday and Thursday. I do not drive because I have a disability that will not allow me to drive so Cap Trans is my only transportation.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None.

Shirley Jackson, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Elderly in area, poverty level of area, mileage to doctor, necessity of service, and disabled in area.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Necessary – only means of transportation in this area.

Doris Lee Ledbetter, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. It should be free, but at least \$1 to \$2 should be charged to those who are on a fixed income. We think that \$5 to \$10 should not be charged for the price just to travel to Plainview or Lubbock.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Some times it is hard to get the bus just to take you around town. You have to call within 24 hours. It's not right. We need more drivers.

Loretta Ann Bolton, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. It should be free, but at least \$1 to \$2 should be charged to those who are on a fixed income. We think that \$5 to \$10 should not be charged for the price just to travel to Plainview or Lubbock.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Some times it is hard to get the bus just to take you around town. You have to call within 24 hours. It's not right. We need more drivers.

Freda Baker, Plainview, Hale County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Elderly have no means of transportation to and from the doctor, grocery store, shopping, etc. Elderly have no family members to transport them. Elderly that have family members live far away. Time is a factor on getting passengers to appointments.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Lack of funds for the elderly – RSVP Bus was discontinued. Therefore, demand response has increased. Elderly can walk to the bus stops. No sheltered bus stops. Demand response is needed for disabled passengers.

Jose Martinez, Floydada, Floyd County (Received in Spanish and Translated)

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Public transit is very necessary to people who request it. Attention to it (public transit) is important. It is working very well.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Public transit in this area is very important. I hope there are more resources to take care of all the users. The service is very good.

Gary Jordan, Ralls, Crosby County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Public transportation is necessary in real-West Texas. It provides a way to the doctor and other necessary trips to the larger city for things the small towns no longer have for the older people.

The population is made up of older people, whose children have had to relocate in the bigger cities for jobs and left their parents to be provided for by rural transportation. So many cannot drive because of health reasons and this is their only way to get to where they need to go. So we need our share of the funds.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Cap Trans is the only transportation provided in our area.

No Name Provided, Plainview, Hale County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. There would be a lot of us that would have a hard time getting around to do important things (grocery, doctor, drugs and to eat).

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. If we had to and could afford it, we would be glad to pay a dollar. I know I would.

Rosario Saenz, Floydada, Floyd County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I don't know about factors. All I know is that we need to get to our appointments and that is a long day.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Janie Corrales, Levelland, Hockley

Key Funding Factors for Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The key factor should be 45 percent sq miles, 10 percent ADA, 10 percent elderly, 10 percent for the low-income, and 25 percent per capita. So it should be at 100 percent allocation to transit agencies. Needs to stay the same at 65 percent rural and 35 percent for small urban cities. Should not go to the 50/50.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Lots of people can not be reached in the rural areas they live in. Some of these people live anywhere from 15 to 20 miles from the nearest town. They have no personal vehicles and many times no private telephones. These are the people we need to reach.

No Name Provided, Lubbock, Lubbock County

Key Funding Factors for Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Primarily, key factors should involve a balance of both square miles and population in allocating funds to transit agencies. An acceptable formula would be 45 percent square mileage and 55 percent population. Allocating 10 percent for selected projects is not necessary and that allocation should be turned

back into funds for transit. The 65 percent rural and 35 percent small urban funding formula is a match to the needs that exist in Texas. The proposed 50/50 does not address properly the needs of communities in rural West Texas, for example, who have no means of transportation whatsoever. Thank You.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Residents in rural West Texas rely heavily on public transportation for medical, work, and all-around mobility.

Claudia Cowley, Ralls, Crosby County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Disabled, elderly and economically disadvantaged population in each area.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The service area of Caprock Community Action Association covers six counties in rural West Texas. Total population is 54,885 fine people, spread over 5,707 very rural square miles. We realize that it is a monumental task to provide a formula that is equitable to all in a state as diversified as Texas and compounded by the fact that we have limited knowledge on the reason why this task must be done before all pertinent information is collected. We feel that it would not be in the best interest of the industry to be disrupted (parked or sold vehicles, down-sizing and services interrupted). This action could negatively impact transit providers and those customers we serve.

It would be helpful to providers to understand the goals and objectives the PTN and commission have set (what are you wanting transportation to look like) so we can make reasonable comments on how best to address the issues. It seems to us that we are heading into a formula restructure without all of the necessary tools to make sound judgment on results. Implementing a new formula should only begin after the following steps are taken:

1. a statewide inventory of services to measure the existing level of service in each operators' territory;
2. define the impact of integrating the substantial HHS funding into public transit before establishing the distribution formula;
3. under-funded transit systems should be supported by disbursing the two years of State and Federal discretionary funding as soon as possible; and
4. after the appropriate steps have been taken and the current unknown identified, our system would like to see a formula that contains some consideration of the disabled, elderly, and economically disadvantaged population in each area.

Neta Hickman, McAdoo, Crosby County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Area-economic makeup-elderly/disabled population.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. In support of the recommendations of the TTA in the efforts to be made by the PTN and Transportation

commission in determining a fair and equitable formula for distribution of public transportation funding, please consider the following:

1. If it becomes necessary to disrupt the current level of services, it would not only undermine our credibility to the public, but could leave many Texans denied transportation in the interim and deserted in the future. We support TTA's position that it would be most beneficial to establish a temporary funding plan utilizing the 10 percent discretionary funding to insure that a hasty decision on a long-term formula not be made.
2. The PTN and the commission need ample time to complete operator and public input sessions, receive and compile all the pertinent information, and get the HHS transportation funding integrated. In a state as large and diverse as Texas, there will most likely be factors come to light that have never been considered relevant.
3. Our service area consists of six counties totaling 5,706 square miles and a total population of 54,885. The average of that population is 28 percent below poverty level, 20 percent disabled and 31.4 percent over the age of 55. A round trip can sometimes be 160 to 200 miles.
4. If a formula is devised to provide funding for equitable levels of service across the state to fully meet the demand, then resulting funds required and allocated to operate at that level in any given area would hopefully result in increases.

John Wilson, Lubbock

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. First of all I do not think any factors would be fair to all systems in Texas, due to the fact that Texas cities vary greatly. For example the population of Laredo and Midland/Odessa are very close however the service parameters are very different and one formula would not do justice to both cities. Even comparing McAllen that has about the same service level as another system, but McAllen has approximately half a million population.

Having said that I think population has to be a factor, as well as level-of-service, and local revenue per capita (to include all forms that generated locally).

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Last year Lubbock was in the 50,000 to 200,000 population bracket. When we were grouped with the other small cities we received \$3.2 million (FY 2002); however today our allocation is \$2.2 million. We have already had to cut our fixed route operations by \$600,000 and we have cut our paratransit operation by over \$300,000. Our total system will carry over 6 million passengers this fiscal year.

Fred Mustain, Welch, Dawson County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Section 5311 Transportation only:

- A. Standard Section 5311 formula: After intercity and TxDOT administrative expenses, 90 percent distributed based on:
1. Population of rural county or area.
 2. Square miles of rural county or rural portion of the county served (areas not being served in a rural transit district should be deducted from that agencies formula).
 3. Section 5311 rural transportation is for all rural residents served and should not be based on the rural areas demographics such as; elderly, disabled, unemployment, etc., rates. These are covered by other available funding such as; Section 5310, Area Agency on Aging, JARC, and other Welfare to Work funding. Federal funding under this program prohibits exclusively serving the elderly, disabled, and low income populations. Redirecting funding based on these demographics would amount to the same thing.
 4. A standard for one-way trips need to be established. There is a vast difference amongst the agencies to date.
 5. Client-based transportation that denies other persons from riding as public transit should not be counted.
- B. Performance-based – after inter-city and TxDOT Administrative expenses are deducted – 10 percent based on:
1. ratio of population served;
 2. ability to sustain or increase services from year-to-year;
 3. amount of match and/or local buy-in to the program beyond the standard 20 percent match. This would include amount of general fares and other revenue generating resources;
 4. amount of coordination conducted with other agencies and purchase of service agreements;
 5. active participation in a 5310 Advisory Board (Since many of those active are pooling 5311 and other resources to make the 5310 program work;
 6. established as part of a rural or regional transit district;
 7. operational hours and days that the transit agency serves it's rural population;
 8. the established goals and objective established for the funding year;
 9. previous 2-3 year average of figures and recalculated every year; and
 10. safety and maintenance records – major at fault accidents per mile over \$1,000 and vehicle down-time.

C. Both 5307 and 5311:

1. Funding should be budgeted for the five counties and/or other rural areas that currently do not have a 5307 or 5311 program serving them. At the end of each program year or with sufficient time to enable other agencies to use for operations or other transit related purposes, unused funding would go back into the performance formula and issued out to eligible transit agencies.
2. New starts for 5307 should use available local/city and start-up funds before being added into the formula.
3. Agencies that are not able to provide the minimum basic transit services on a continuous basis due to poor management that leads to cost overruns should have their budgets locked down and be given a period of time to turn things around. Those not able to do so should not be given additional funds to “bail” them out, but TxDOT and the transit. District board/local authority should seek another agency to run the program. If funding is stopped, it should be set aside for that area and if not used, placed into the performance formula as mentioned in C1 above.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Average distances between major stops are 63 miles with some destinations being 200 or more miles away from the pick-up.

Manuel Gonzales, Lubbock, Lubbock County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I believe key factors should be a balance of both population and square miles in the allocation to transit agencies by formula. I feel that 45 percent square mileage and 55 percent population would be an acceptable formula. I feel that the selected projects commission would be removed and the 10 percent go back into allocations to transit agencies by formula. In conclusion, I think the 65 percent rural and 35 percent urban city formula should stay the same and it should not go to the proposed 50/50.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Residents in this area rely heavily on Public transportation. For many, minimizing or taking their transportation is taking away their livelihood. I strongly feel reducing west Texas area funding is unacceptable and do not support any methods in doing so.

Myrtle Mangum, Slaton, Lubbock County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Funding should be set up according to needs in the area. Also, I do not think that it is fair that larger cities get most of the funding compared to rural areas here in west Texas. I think the transit agency formula should be based on 55 percent population and 45 percent square miles

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I would not be able to go to dialysis without the SPARTAN buses and I really appreciate the caring drivers and their concern for my safety.

Other Comments Received

Letter from Danny Andrews, Plainview, Hale County

When my mother died in April of 2000, I knew that my father, Dr. C.C. Andrews, was not capable of driving safely. I also knew he would need to get to several activities so he could maintain social contact with people.

I believe God sent us an answer to our prayer – transportation provided by Caprock Community Action. For more than three years, Cap Trans faithfully provided my father with a ride to the YMCA, Senior Citizens Center, and Santa Fe House Retirement Center – his principal points of social contact aside from his church.

I believe this service helped prolong his life by giving him a chance to be with people in various functions. He enjoyed the drivers and making friends with other riders. He was able to keep up with the community's progress because his travels on Cap Trans took him throughout town.

I am so appreciative of the good work Caprock Community Action does and the many lives it impacts. Also, I know it is a vital link in our economy and makes a huge difference in the lives of folks who cannot afford transportation or who no longer can drive.

My father died last November 15 at the age of 84. I know if he were here today, he would be singing the praises of Caprock Community Action and The Cap Trans program.

Letter from Melba Olsen and Bill Joe Cross, Teacher, Plainview Adult Center, Hale County

How important is Cap Trans of Plainview, Texas to our students? In the words of Ethel Martinez, adult education student, "Well, I guess I would have to walk everywhere."

Many of our students are single females, many with children. There is no other method of transportation available for them to get to the grocery store, the doctor, or other important, necessary appointments. Without public transportation, they could not even visit their children's schools. Recently, a retired teacher at our school had to quit driving due to poor health, and she is counting on Cap Trans to take her the places she must go, including coming to volunteer at our school.

We really appreciate Cap Trans, and all the rides it provides for our students, and everyone in Plainview. Funding for this essential service is vital to keeping our students coming to school.

LUFKIN DISTRICT

Attendees

Lyle Nelson, Brazos Transit District
Billy Feltman, Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities
Margie Grandy, TxDOT Lufkin District
Wayan Bentley, TxDOT Lufkin District
Melissa Trevino, TxDOT Lufkin District

Speaker Comments

Lyle Nelson, Representing County Judges and Mayor of Lufkin

I have two written comments from State Representative Dan Ellis, as well as Mayor Bernal of the City of Lufkin. I have also been asked to read a statement from the County Judges in our area that is very short.

As county judges representing numerous counties that are served by the district, we are very interested in and concerned with any proposal funding formula. The district provides a wide array of quality general public transit services to the citizens of our counties. We would be opposed to any funding formula which would result in a loss of funding to our transit system. Our county budgets are severely stretched; our long standing financial support of our general public transit system is evidence of our commitment to mobility for our citizens. The district provides critical transportation to all of our citizens within this general public system, including our veterans, our disabled, our retirees, and those citizens on public assistance.

We have joined with the district to build a strong general public transit system, which serves everybody and we are strongly against any funding formula which would detract from that system. We ask that in developing a funding formula for rural and small urban transit districts, that the department seek ways to increase funding for the mobility program that we and the district provide to our citizens. With the passage of HB 3588 in the recent legislative session, we feel certain that the Texas Transportation Commission has the tools to increase transit funding for not only our citizens but every Texan. We look forward to working with the department on this common goal. Thank you.

Billy Feltman, Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you regarding any fund formula that would affect our general public transit system.

Brazos Transit District has provided general public transit services to the City of Lufkin since 1988. Before they began to serve Lufkin, those with disabilities and no car, and other barriers to transportation had to get around town as best they could. The transit system makes a big, huge impact on our mobility and our lives and we would be opposed to any funding formula that would decrease funding to our transit system.

Too often individuals with disabilities are provided different and lesser transit access than the general public and that has not been the case here in Lufkin. Since its inception, our transit system has provided the same access to everyone. There is not a system for the general public in a separate less available system for the disabled. We have a fully-accessible, fixed-route system, which is complimented by a demand-responsive vehicle for those who cannot get to a bus stop. This is the way it should be state-wide.

Our committee would like to see a funding formula that would allow our transit system to expand and grow. We would like to see more frequent services. As it is now, in Lufkin you have wait for about an hour to catch a regular transit bus and we would like to see that change to about 30 minutes if we could. We are also concerned that there are no bus stop shelters. Our

committee has been trying to find a solution to that problem. So, you can see we are not looking at considering any funding cuts. We are looking to see this system grow and improve.

We would also like to see the demand and response service component doubled. What we do not want to see our service diminish in any way. We are opposed to any funding formula that would reduce funding to our transit system either here in Lufkin or in any of the Deep East Texas surrounding area.

Since day one, Brazos Transit District has provided a general public transit program in Lufkin for everyone regardless of disability, income, race, age, or any other factor. We want to see that continue. I think you need to consider that when you are talking about transit systems you have a lot people who depend on it to go to work and earn a living. Multiple people in this area are riding the transit system and are able to hold a job because of that. Without that service they would be sitting home watching soap operas. So we want to see the program continue and grow so that we can all share in the quality of life here in Lufkin. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Comment Forms Received

Dan Ellis, State Representative, District 18

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. As State Representative for District 18, comprising East Montgomery, Polk, and Liberty counties, which is served by The District, I am extremely interested in and very concerned with any proposed formula which affects my rural area.

The District provides a vital service to the numerous aged, disabled, and low-income people within my district. As I testified numerous times during the debate on HB 3588, I vehemently oppose any reduction in funding which would adversely affect the invaluable service which The District provides.

Due to a number of factors, client base, access and distance to major medical facilities (The Texas Medical Center and VA hospitals) my constituents rely heavily upon The District for their transportation needs.

I ask the department to seek ways to increase funding for the mobility program The District provides.

I ask to be kept “in the loop” regarding any funding changes, prior to their implementation. If additional input from me is needed, please do not hesitate to call me at (936) 327-5181. Sincerely, Dan Ellis.

Louis A. Bronough, Mayor of Lufkin

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. As the Mayor of Lufkin, I am very interested in any formula process that would affect our public transit system. The District, formally Brazos Transit District, has served the City of Lufkin well since 1988. Our system provides both fixed route and ADA demand response services, which are important to the citizens of not only Lufkin, but Diboll, as well as the counties that surround Lufkin. Thus,

myself and the City of Lufkin would vigorously oppose any funding formula that would result in a loss of funding to our transit system.

I would ask that the Texas Transportation Commission look to the new funding opportunities that were created in the passage of HB 3588 when considering any funding formula for rural and small urban transit districts. The purpose of that bill, as articulated by the commission members themselves, was to allow the department new tools to meet the growing mobility needs of the citizens of Texas. Any new funding formula should honor that commitment by increasing, not decreasing funding for our transit system.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and I look forward to assisting you in any manner that I can in insuring that our transit system continues to grow to meet the needs of not only the citizens of Lufkin, but our entire region.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

ODESSA DISTRICT

Attendees

Fred Mustain, West Texas Opportunities, Permian Basin Rural Transit District
Marlin Johnston, City of Midland
Alfredo Gonzales, TxDOT Odessa District

Speaker Comments

Fred Mustain, West Texas Opportunities, Permian Basin Rural Transit District

We are proudly providing public rural transportation for 17 counties. Only 12 are covered by the current funding formula. We feel the formula should be based on population, square mileage of the area that we serve, coordination with agencies, local and county match and the support they give us, and on performance and the ability to meet the established goals and objectives.

Rural transit means transit for everybody. No one left behind, no one passed by. Thanks you.

Marlin Johnston, Assistant City Manager of Midland

We certainly do not envy your challenge of what you are trying to do with the formula funding and we will also be sending in written comments later on after this meeting.

As you know, we began this process of starting a new system with expectations that future funding would grow and be comparable to other cities our size. The reality is that other communities across Texas have enjoyed the benefits of Midland/Odessa not participating in funding transit systems over the years. Now that we have a system and want to enter into the funding pool will certainly cause some discomfort over a loss of funding that is going on now. Our level of funding is based on partial year of operations and it concerns us that we may be

fixed at low-level funding that will not allow us to actively meet our local needs. We sympathize with small urban programs that may be concerned about potential losses as we are also concerned that our level of funding will be low. As I said earlier, there are three more newstarts that could possibly be coming up short with funding and this is the reality of funding levels in Texas.

We are not asking for more than our share. We just want a chance to be an equal partner with TxDOT and other communities in Texas. Also, a criteria that we could support is the efficiencies in a system. The Midland/Odessa system joined into shared maintenance as a way to affect cost savings. We also favor a criteria not based on historical allocations, as that approach would certainly adversely impact us. Any cooperative efforts that we may have with other systems and we may also want to look and local out of pocket matches as a way to increase some funds that TxDOT has available. Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

PARIS DISTRICT

Attendees

Penny Sansom, TxDOT Paris District
Kenny Graves, NET Opportunities, Inc.
Ven Hammonds, Texoma Rural Transit District
David Caldwell, HCCOA (Greenville)
Bob Wood, Sherman MPO

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the Paris District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

Kenny Graves, Paris, Lamar County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Funding should be allowed based on need (per capita earnings in region) and population as well as average passenger miles per trip.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. The rural areas of the state should merit consideration. Our small agency services six rural counties, amassing 400+ rides per day.

Ven Hammonds, Sherman, Grayson County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation

- Population and area served. Units of service provided (rides are what it is all about!).
- Hold present funding as baseline.
- Allocate increased funds for transit based upon meeting and increasing level of services, especially consolidation/coordination of various agency client (special) transportation as integrated part of public transit services.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Public transportation has evolved over 15+ years from a predominantly elderly and disabled service to a predominately public transit service that coordinates and includes special needs and client-based transportation. Examples of coordinated transit services include MHMR, TDOA, AAA, workforce, Medicaid, etc. Please do not throw out these babies when changing the water simply to be able to say “we changed the allocation formula.”

Comments Received Via the Internet

L. D. Williamson, Clarksville, Red River County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. The formula should include past performance as a way to encourage systems to provide quality customer service.
2. The formula should result in a general public system that serves everyone, regardless of whom is paying for their trips.
3. The formula should increase funding to all systems by integrating Human Service funding currently available to TxDOT through House Bill (HB) 3588 into the existing public transit network in Texas.
4. A financial incentive bonus program should be established to reward systems like Ark-Tex Council of Governments Rural Transit District that successfully coordinate with other entities to pool resources to increase access to mobility across their region.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We are a rural transit district in Northeast Texas serving a population of 310,911 in a 9-county region. Last year we had 278,819 passenger trips traveling a total of 1,310,424 miles. We think that any funding formula should certainly be as fair as possible to all concerned.

HB 3184 requires the department to adopt a formula effective September 1, 2004; however, there is nothing in HB 3588 or HB 3184 that prohibits the adoption of a temporary formula. We recommend the department adopt the current formula as a temporary formula. This would allow time to inventory and evaluate all the Health and Human Services transportation funding that was transferred to the department in HB 3588 in order to integrate that funding into the final formula. As a result, no system would receive a funding cut, but all Texans would benefit by a comprehensive, well-designed transportation plan.

We encourage you to adopt this strategy and appreciate the opportunity to comment.

PHARR DISTRICT

Attendees

Tomas D. Reyna, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Richard Hinojosa, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Cate Ball, WAVE
Melba Ramos, TxDOT, Pharr District
Gracie Cantu, TxDOT, Pharr District
Norma Zamora, City of Brownsville Bus
Tom Logan, City of Brownsville Bus
Alex Lorio, City of Brownsville Bus
Manual Flores, LRGDC
Mark Maday, City of Brownsville Bus
David De Leon, Harlingen/San Benito MPO
Amy Rodriguez, TxDOT, Pharr District
Robin Longwell, TxDOT, Pharr District
Franklin Towes, TxDOT, Pharr District

Speaker Comments

Norma Zamora, Brownsville Urban Transit System

Our population increased by 40 percent from the last census. The city limits expanded by 120 percent. We went from 37 square miles to 89 square miles. Yet, we still have 60-minute headways and have not increased service. Due to the lack of funding we have not been able to keep up with this growth. Therefore our service has been suffering.

I would like at this time for the department to continue move forward toward a goal of coordinating state clients into the system of public transportation, to hold harmless transit agencies at their current funding levels until state clients can be coordinated, and to avoid any disruption in services. I would also encourage the department to integrate client transportation funding into the public transit, to address transit systems that are now considered under-funded, and to provide an incentive for transit systems to coordinate services. I would also urge TxDOT to establish an optimum, practical level-of-service that transit systems are to achieve in the provisions of transit services when accepting coordinated client funding with a goal that such level of service is the promotion of the general mobility for the general public inclusive of state clients. Finally, I support a cooperative approach between TxDOT and transit agencies to address public transit funding needs to both small and rural systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Comment Forms Received

Lisa A. Cortinas, Victoria, Victoria County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Regarding the urban state funding process.

- Eliminate the formula allocation of funding spent by an individual urban transit district during the preceding state biennium.
- Eliminate the formula allocation of state funding by all urban transit districts during the preceding state biennium.
- A portion of the funding formula should be based on performance (i.e., trips, miles traveled, and fare box revenues).
- The remaining should be based on the federal allocation already in place.
- Most importantly is to fund at the minimum at the hold harmless with no cuts to current levels.
- Eliminate the 10 percent allocation to the commission selected projects. Current transit provider needs are far greater than the current funding level and setting aside this 10 percent is not practical in a time when funding needs are far greater.

Regarding the rural state and federal funding process:

- Same as first two above.
- Hold harmless with no funding cuts.
- Eliminate the 10 percent commission selected projects and allocate those funds to transit providers using a performance based allocation.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

SAN ANGELO DISTRICT

Attendees

Jeffrey Sutton, Concho Valley RTD
Walter G. McCullough, TxDOT
Mary Kay Kuss, Concho Valley Workforce Board
Mike Brown, Tom Green County CURRTD
Allen Amos, Concho County CURRTD
Larry Isom, Reagan County
Sam Scott, CURRTD
Leon Standard, Irion County CURRTD
Ron Piri, TxDOT
Elisa Smetane, City of San Angelo
Robert Browne, Sterling County
Roy Blair, Coke County
Randy Young, McCulloch County
Don Scott, Concho Valley Rural Transit
Noelia Hernandez, Concho Valley Rural Transit
John DeWitt, TxDOT
Jung Han Chen, City of San Angelo
Thomas G. Robinson, TxDOT (PTC)

Speaker Comments

Randy Young, County Judge, McCullough County

I am here with a whole host of county judges from our area who are very interested in rural transportation. I would like to speak on behalf of them and on behalf and in the interest of the Concho Valley Rural Transit District. I would also like to thank you for the opportunity to give our input and to TxDOT for providing us a forum.

The principle justification for the 5311 Rural Program and the national mobility goals is to serve the economically disadvantaged, the elderly, and those individuals with disabilities in rural areas. The Concho Valley region is one of the more isolated areas in our state. In our region, which covers 15,000 square miles with a population density of only 3.7 people per square mile, we have lost a lot of our small town medical facilities and in at least three of our counties

there is not even a pharmacy. This requires a lot of commitment from rural transportation to allow the elderly and disabled to remain in their homes and to live independently.

Our local cities and counties have already made a commitment to our programs by contributing over 20 percent of our total budget directly in local tax dollars. Without that commitment and of course the equitable funding from the state, many of these people would be forced to leave their homes and to lose their independence completely.

In your distribution of these funds, we have some things we would like to ask of you. We ask that you base the formula on some known demographic facts. The TxDOT formula developed and presented in the April 2003 operators meeting used 45 percent population base, 10 percent elderly, 10 percent disabled, 10 percent poverty, and 25 percent land mass as a balanced approach that is unbiased to all regions of the state. Within the federal legislative guidelines, not only in the letter of the law, but also within the spirit of serving the needs of special segments of society as well.

The formula is based on known demographic facts verified and revised by the census bureau. The formula was created with a lot of input from diverse sources. The staff of TxDOT in Austin worked with many of the operators to achieve this balanced approach. It is fair to both the heavily populated areas, as well as the very rural areas of state such as ours. One change we would suggest is in the proposed application of the 10 percent set-aside for performance incentive. We believe that this money could instead be directed over the next six years to lessen the impact on the operators who might see a decrease in funding under the proposed formula funding. After the transition period this 10 percent could be redirected to performance bonuses.

We in the Concho Valley Rural Transit District do not gain any significant amount by applying this formula and if predications of our population continuing to decline are correct we may possibly see a decline in our total funding in the future. However, the formula and the resulting level of funding would always reflect the reality of the service in all the areas.

There have been discussions on the inclusion of funds from the contracts being negotiated with the help of human services for transportation of special needs clients. The amount of funds available, and certainly the number of people to be served, are unknown at this time. We feel like this is an area that should not be included in discussions of a formula at the current time.

The level-of-service approach is attractive at first glance because it attempts to gauge the transportation needs of a given area and then provide sufficient needs to meet those needs. For fixed-route operators in small and large cities that may be the correct application. However, for demand response operations such as ours in rural areas, it does not lend itself well to that application. The wide- ranging variables as to the population density, the availability of medical facilities, and other socio economic factors make that application of level-of-service funding open to a lot of interpretation and there is no certainty of equitable application to demand response type services. This theory is also very reliant on an unlimited source of funding to achieve the desired level-of-service, and we know that is never the case.

In conclusion, the Concho Valley Rural Transportation District and the Concho Valley Council of Governments supports the TxDOT formula that was developed and presented in April 2003. We are grateful to you for the opportunity to talk and address these areas of our concerns.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Sean Scott, San Angelo, Tom Green County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I feel the numbers used for the formula should come from actual verifiable sources, such as the census. I like the 45 percent on population 10 percent elderly 10 percent disable 10 percent poverty and 25 percent on land mass theory that was discussed in 2003. This formula will cause some districts to get a cut in funding but the 10 percent that has been taken out off the top that money can be used to help offset some of the burden that the over-funded districts will incur.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I feel using these numbers will give a better overall picture of what is needed and will give a fair and accurate way to distribute the funding – using performance-based numbers will encourage not so reliable numbers and will create a huge headache on how to audit them and will probably end up taking dollars out of the system to pay for developing a system and a check and balance on that system of reporting.

Concho Valley Workforce Development Board, San Angelo, covering Coke, Concho, Crockett, Irion, Kimble, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Reagan, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton and Tom Green Counties

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Please take into consideration transportation services to individuals participating in employment and training programs (welfare, unemployed, employed). Reliable and consistent transportation services are critical to locating employment and remaining employed. We believe the 10 percent set aside for performance incentives might be better utilized in serving individuals seeking employment or are employed and need access to transportation services. We believe if employment and training transportation funds are included in the formula, then all transportation funds should be included in the new formula. Instead of being exclusive, we believe being more inclusive allows greater service through leveraged funds. We also agree that a consistent reporting system based on performance is appropriate.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We have heard transit providers say Employment and Training has their own money and welfare programs, unemployed and employment should not be included. We receive state funds for transportation like these other organizations and, like them, it is just not enough funding. Our \$13,730 may provide for better service to our populations as long as there is more flexibility in transportation options rather than utilizing existing providers when it does not meet an individual's needs. For example, an employed single mother with two small children has to walk and be at the bus stop at 6:30 a.m.(when the buses start running), has to take her children to day care, get off the bus,

wait an hour for the next bus and would never make it to her 8:00 - 5:00 job until 9 or 9:30 a.m. The bus picks up in front of her office building - at 4:50 (remember she gets off at 5:00) and no buses run from the depot after 5:30 p.m. She still has to have some way to get to the daycare before they close at 6:00 and then get home. She has put in a full 12-hour day and still has to fix dinner, do homework with her children, bathe them and get them to bed. Most of us that have vehicles would not subject our children to this grueling schedule nor would we be inclined to spend at least three hours a day accessing transportation on a fixed route. This is an unrealistic expectation for anyone and especially someone who works full-time to support their children and pays taxes.

Another example is an employed individual who relies on scheduling transportation services who is “bumped” or not provided scheduled services due to a Medicare/Medicaid patient and without notice who cannot remain employed long due to lack of reliable transportation. Employed individuals are taxpaying citizens. Unemployed individuals are potential taxpaying citizens that cannot contribute to society because they lack a means of reliable transportation. In our service delivery area, three county DHS office are without staff and although DHS in Tom Green is providing limited services within those counties, more and more individuals are needing to travel to Tom Green County to access services, shopping, doctors, hospitals, etc. We believe transportation planning needs to involve more than a couple of agencies and needs to address conflicting or limiting regulations.

No Name Provided, Rural Concho County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The basis for the formula must be fixed factors. Any other factor would require the establishment of a money gobbling audit department. Using population, disabled, poverty, elderly and land mass is fair. The push to keep current levels of funding will continue to do great harm to people in areas like the rural area around San Antonio and other growth areas of the state. Let’s correct the problem and get it out of the way. Try to do as little harm as possible by phasing in the cuts and the increases.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None

SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT

Attendees

Al J. Notzon, II, AACOG
Jean Davis, AACOG
Julie Brown, TxDOT
Sarah Cook, CCSWT
Elsa Reyes, City of Del Rio
Charles English, Smart Growth SA
Carolyn Goodall, TxDOT
Lou Vegion, TxDOT

Speaker Comments

Al Notzon, Executive Director, Alamo Area Council of Governments.

We are a rural transportation district. I want to thank TxDOT for this opportunity to come before you. I like the idea of the video conferencing. You get around the state fairly easily and we get to hear comments from around the state and not have to spend a day traveling back and forth. We appreciate that. I also want to thank Chairman Williamson for his comments.

I think part of what we are seeing is the need to look at service in Texas. I am really appreciative of what happened in the legislature where we talked about the ability to consolidate transportation services in the rural areas. It doesn't make sense to have competing transit systems running back and forth with each other. The dollars that are available are not sufficient to be able to provide this service without having that kind of efficiency.

Funding, obviously, has not kept pace with growth. We are a high growth area. Obviously, capping or hold harmless preserves current inequities. Capping of a growth area even exacerbates the problem more. We should be providing rural transportation throughout Texas in a fair way. Utilizing historical funding from year to year penalizes new services and growth areas.

We believe that formulas should be based on population served, probably no less than 50 percent in that factor. We think that service and performance should play a role. That could also be used to protect existing providers that perform and should be built into the formula. We believe the hard to serve populations also have to be addressed. For instance, the number of elderly, the number of people in poverty, and the number of disabled are all examples that should be included in the formula.

The issue of low densities and distances has to be addressed whether it be in terms of vehicle miles traveled or square miles. There is no such thing as a hold harmless formula. If there is a current inequity or growth area not being service, that area is being harmed every time a fair formula is not developed.

Again, we want to thank you for this opportunity. I like concept of this way of getting input. Hopefully, next time, in looking at the response that we had today we can get some of our clients as well to be able to talk about what the needs are as they see it in terms of demand responsive system. I also like the comments I heard from San Angelo.

Sara Cook, Transit Director, Community Council of Southwest Texas

We are a rural public transportation system that provides transportation in Dimmit, Edwards, Kinny, LaSalle, Maverick, Real, Uvalde, and Zavala counties.

I have a few issues that I would like to comment on tonight. In dealing with the performance factor or variable into the formula, I feel that we should be cautious when we approach this for several reasons. One reason being that each operator has reporting benchmarks that are different. In other words, someone may report one-way trip being one type of trip and another may report it being another type of trip. I think that to examine performance of the

variables in the formula, the department needs to develop a uniform reporting process or system with trips, riders, miles, and so forth.

The next thing that I would like to mention is that in my area we are for the integration of the health and human services funding into the kind of delivery system for the current providers. I do not feel the department should go looking outside what is already there, for example with the aspect of mainstream transportation coming into the department. I do not think at this point it would be feasible or even make sense for the department to go out for bids for this type of service when the providers are here, and have the equipment and the know-how.

I also think in bringing in health and human services into the funding formula you also need to eliminate the middleman. Give the providers the empowerment to make decisions or handle the eligibility of these clients, the scheduling, and the planning. Who else knows the ridership better than ourselves? Who else knows what the needs are, the strength of our system, and the weaknesses of our system?

I would also like to mention that we should consider population as a variable, as well. Not at the population as a whole, but look at the population in ratio of elderly population and low-income population. One of our counties and service areas is ranked in the top five of the poorest counties in the U.S. This county, counties from the Hill Country area all the way down the Colonias and many of our other counties, have no running water, no telephone, no electricity, let alone any means of transportation.

Also, I would like to mention that not only do we need to continue to meet the level-of-service as far as the funding that we currently provide, but we need to look at the gaps in services that are out there. For instance, the stakeholders. We need to look at other avenues of funding, coordinating, technical assistance, things that are very hard for a rural area to get the type of systems that metropolitan areas already have.

I want to mention the area of miles traveled. Our drivers start their routes at 3:00 a.m. and their day does not end until 6:00 p.m. Our clients are on the road anywhere from 12 to 14 hours just to seek medical attention, to seek educational training, to travel to work, and to seek legal assistance. This is the type of transportation that we provide to our clientele and it does not even meet the basic needs for a quality of life for them.

I think that whatever we look at as a formula, this is a very positive process that we are experiencing now. I really like the format that we have tonight, but I think as a provider I would accept nothing less than a fair and realistic formula. As a department you should not accept anything less from us than accountability and to provide the service that we are here to provide on a day to day basis. I think that we get lost in what we are here to do. Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

Al Notzon

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Population (at least 50 percent); ridership (at least 20 percent); number of elderly (around 10 percent); number in poverty (around 10 percent); number of square miles (around 10 percent).

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Growing area; increased demand for services; and increasing coordination of rural public transportation services/providers.

Sarah Hidalgo

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Population; low-income population and elderly population (ratio); demographics; performance – develop a uniform reporting process; gaps in service; need (equipment, training, etc.); integrate health and human services to current operators and not bid out to other private providers; and empower operators to handle its own scheduling, eligibility, planning—cut out the middle man and give those funds to operators (health and human services).

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Need more vehicles to provide more service; need additional funding to operate; and need more user friendly health and human service regional office.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

J. Jay Moore, San Antonio, Bexar County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Access to public transportation should be required, wherever feasible, in every public facility. This should dovetail with the need for access to facilities by disabled people, who could use paratransit service or “mainstream” fixed or flex route bus service. Mobility by people who do not or cannot drive a private automobile should be favorably considered in every planning process.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. In San Antonio, the VIA bus system eliminated hundreds of bus stops in August, 2003. This deliberately ignored the fact that many riders are mobility impaired and cannot walk a long distance to another bus route. Only the fully disabled are able to access the paratransit vans. Bus service needs to be expanded, not reduced.

Al Notzon, Alamo Area Council of Governments, Covering 11 Counties

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) provides services in 11 counties as Alamo Regional Transportation (ART). AACOG extends its sincere appreciation to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for their efforts in facilitating a series of formula funding meetings.

We support the attempts of the TxDOT public transportation division to work toward the development of a new funding formula for the rural transportation providers. We encourage TxDOT to change the current formula, which uses only historical data, to a new formula that more accurately addresses regional needs. All transportation providers seek to improve mobility

for clients of all ages and all need levels. The proposed formula will have a positive affect on the economically disadvantaged, the elderly, the disabled and the general public in the rural areas.

AACOG believes that the TXDOT formula developed and presented in April 2003, is a move in the right direction where the distribution basis can be described as follows:

- 45 Percent Total population,
- 10 percent number of elderly,
- 10 percent number of disabled,
- 10 percent number of economical disadvantaged, and
- 25 percent land mass.

We could also support any change in formula, which, would increase the percentage of population and reduction in percentage for square miles.

To be consistent, this formula should be applied to both federal and state funding allocations.

AACOG can support a phase-in of no more that three years for those systems, which suffer a severe decline in funding. This period would give these providers time to search for other types of funding to supplement their systems.

AACOG supports the application of performance measures. Performance measures should encourage improved performance and increased cost effectiveness. These measures should reward transportation systems based on the following:

- lowest cost per mile,
- lowest cost per passenger,
- lowest cost per vehicle mile,
- highest number of passengers per miles, and
- lowest cost per trip.

Judgment of performance must be based on universally accepted, verifiable data. All providers should report performance in the same way, thus allowing for fair comparison among providers. Current reporting methods should be continued to the fullest extent possible to minimize systems' time spent on reporting, thus maximizing time spent providing services to clients.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None

Mark MacDonald, San Antonio, Bexar County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

EQUITY of funding for pedestrian facilities.

EQUITY of funding for bicycle facilities

EQUITY of funding for public transportation facilities

EQUITY MEANS: Highway \$ = Pedestrian (Bus, bike, walk, wheels)\$

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None

TYLER DISTRICT

Attendees

Randy Redmond, TxDOT Tyler District
Dave Spitz, TxDOT Tyler District
Marty Allen, TxDOT Tyler District
Delaina Mayer-Pipes, TxDOT Tyler District
Roxanne McKinley, East Texas Council of Governments
John W. Sims, New Canaan Baptist Church Brotherhood
Billy Roberts, City of Caney
Mike McKinley, Public
James Shaw, GETTA (Tyler)
Norman Schenck, Tyler Transit
Tom King, Just Transportation Alliance
Barbara Prather, Healthern Monastery (Mineola)
Mike Murray, East Texas Council of Governments
Mark Sweeney, East Texas Council of Governments
Sandra Hodges, Rusk County Transportation
Kathy Holdway, A Circle of Ten, Inc. Network for Collaboration

Speaker Comments

Roxanne McKinley, East Texas Council of Governments

We are a 5311 funding program that operates in 14 counties in over 10,000 square miles. The current funding allocation for rural public transportation is unfair to the East Texas Council of Governments and a lot of other rural operators. Regarding the health and human service transportation problem that was mentioned earlier, that once we fund this through the rural operators it is going to fix our rural transportation funding problem. Well, the funds that we have now for the rural public is not going to be any different because the funds that come from the health and human service money is going to be client specific. So we are going to have to service those health and human service clients with those funds.

The funding allocation that we would support would be based on population, population density, the elderly, the disabled, and low-income as a part of the formula factors. If a performance measure is used it needs to be fair to all operators. One based on cost per trip would not be fair to providers who have to go 80 to 90 miles roundtrip. We feel that a cost per mile would be a whole lot more fair to all operators in lieu of a cost per trip, where other performance measures would hurt the clients in the very rural areas. Thank you for letting us speak.

Tom King, Just Transportation Alliance

Earlier some had mentioned that it was important for the transit agencies, TTA, and TxDOT all get together to work on this formula. There is a glaring omission there. Nobody mentioned consumers. They have got to be included in this process. We have an opportunity to

have a transit system that operates based on consumer needs rather than starting from what transit providers need and working backwards.

One recommendation that we support is that TxDOT develop a system of rural mobility managers within each district that have the capability of brokering rides for riders across agency lines, across provider lines. So that trips become about what the rider needs and not about the limitations of what transit providers can do.

The hold harmless approach means that rural transit districts like ours stay permanently under-funded. I ran off this chart of what the rural district allocations are. Here is a whole bunch of us down here. There are two bars that go way up. So, all of us that are talking about freezing funding so that nobody loses any condemn us to remain down here. There is no magic funding fairy that is going to come along and wave a magic wand and fill up our empty coffers for those of us down on the bottom end. There is no manna coming from transit heaven. We have got to figure out a way to do this. The fact that we were at the trough way back in the beginning is not material here. We have a need.

Level-of-service is going to measure us. Our rural transit district avoids marketing so that they won't be flooded. When we did a survey recently we found that 93 percent of respondents didn't even know there was a rural transit service. People do not even know we are here. East Texas has 6 percent more seniors than the rest of the state average. We have 250,000 people with disabilities in the East Texas Council of Government service region. That is about one in five of us.

If you divided the money up strictly by population East Texas would still be under-funded because we have an inordinately high rate of seniors, the oldest demographic in Texas. The farther northeast you go, the older we get. By the end of this decade, one in four of us will be over 65. We are the transportation disaster looming on the horizon. Locking into the old historic funding formula is not going to help.

I recognize that we have a system that rewards progress, rewards districts that coordinate, rewards community investment, and requires providers to measure performance. But we have got to include population in there. We have to include a realistic look at what the population is and not punish all the guys that are down here because we didn't happen to get started 20 years ago. Thank you.

John Sims, New Canaan Baptist Church, Whitehouse, Texas

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak. I wasn't going to speak at first, but after listening to some of the other comments that were made I decided to present a few ideas as a customer. I live in Troup, but the organization I represent is in Whitehouse.

Many times customers, the elderly of our community, call me because I do a lot of volunteer work, because they want trips to Tyler. They also call other people that live in Troupe and surrounding areas. They need trips to Tyler, Jacksonville, so forth and they are willing to pay to do this. They do not know about the rural system. There is no demand-response system that they can call. There is no advertisement of this program. I think program should be included in this in getting the word out to the people. I take a lady once a week that goes to the

Smith County Clinic. She gives me \$5.00 to take her town. I sit with her in the hospital and then I take her back to Troup. There are three or four other people that I know who do this. You need to look at the customer demand and not so much at more of a provider that we already have. I do not really have anything to say about that. But the demand and response should be one of the main criteria of this. Thank you,

Kathy Holdway, Circle of Ten, Inc. Network for Collaboration

We have a network of organizations that represent faith-based groups, colleges, schools, and community-based agencies that are doing lots of different kinds of work in rural East Texas. They are trying to increase and multiply health and opportunities, work force development, and financial literacy just to name a few.

The bottom line will almost always will be how they are going to get there. How are they going to get to that doctor's appointment? If they get that job, if they get that wonderful work force development. We are seeing some really innovative programs happen that do not usually happen. But, the bottom line is still that I get off at 11:00 p.m. and how am I going to get home?

The funds that we are getting in East Texas are not enough. The organizations that are trying to make a difference cannot do that if the transportation is not there. I appreciate your time.

Comment Forms Received

Kasey Holdway, Julie, Smith County; work in Cherokee & Van Zandt Counties.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Agencies serving people with disabilities, community-based, faith based, education, health, recreation, workforce development, intervention agencies working together to deliver and multiply service face lack of transportation.

There is a need for region-wide coordination of the existing transportation resources. Need to encourage more consumers to participate in this process.

No Name Given Rusk, Cherokee County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Population and number of elderly in poverty, low population density.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. East Texas is severely under-funded.

Comments Received Via the Internet

Deitrick R. Johnson, Longview, Gregg County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Equity and increased funding.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We need a system of equity, but also increased funding. Proposed U.S. congressional funding for an increase should help the situation. A 65/35 rural/urban split would cause hardship to many current urban systems. A current split of 50/50 with an increase in allocation seems logical.

Norman C. Schenck, Tyler, Smith County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. We recommend the following change to the Rural Public Transportation Funding Formula:

- 50 percent - rural population,
- 35 percent - population density,
- 5 percent - economic disadvantaged population.
- 5 percent - elderly and disabled population, and
- 5 percent - performance measure of cost per mile*.

*Until TxDOT unifies the data gathering of other performance measures and each rural public transit operator is funded comparable to other operators, performance factors such as percent of population served, number of trips provided or any other like factor would not be appropriate.

The revised funding formula should be fully implemented over a five year period.

Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

50 percent population - The federal government allocates the Federal Rural Transit funds based solely on rural population. Therefore, it should be a major factor in the state funding formula.

35 percent population density - It is a well known fact that the cost per trip in a less dense populated area is higher. Areas of West and South Texas would benefit on this aspect. The service areas with lower population density should receive additional funds to serve their area. They have to travel longer distances to take their riders to Medical appointments, education, and shopping.

5 percent economic disadvantaged population.

5 Percent elderly and disabled population - These three categories reflect the majority of ridership in the Rural Public Transportation Program.

5 percent cost per mile - Most of the comments made last summer and this past month indicate that there needs to be a performance measure in the formula. In our opinion, as stated above, this is the only fair performance measure.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. The split of rural and urban needs to stay the same or if changed do so over time, three-to-five years and change no

more than 5 percent. The Current 50/50 split works best for the Tyler transit system. The proposed 65/35 rural/urban split would reduce our state dollars by as much as \$93,000 with a total impact of over double that number (could be as high as \$400,000). This would be because of the leveraging of state dollars with FTA capital and operating funds.

Anne Reese, Tyler, Smith County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I am in favor of ETCOG's formula recommendations.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None

No Name Provided, Longview, Gregg County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Use factors that can be validated. Factors should promote access to service across the service area. Avoid factors, especially performance, that plays to the measures rather than providing service to those on the edge of a service area or in remote areas.

Get it right the first time. A new formula should be incorporated only in the context of deploying the health and human service moneys. Do it at the same time to avoid any service disruptions.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. There needs to be more public transit service on the ground. I think this is probably the case in any areas of the state. General public transportation should be the priority and we certainly need that.

Captain Nancy Robichaux, Tyler, Wood County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. As a member of the GETTA Board of East Texas, TUMPOT is an organization that is trying to help underprivileged women and children we recommend the following changes to the Rural Public Transportation Funding Formula:

50 percent - rural population,

35 percent - population density,

5 percent - economic disadvantaged population.

5 percent - elderly and disabled population, and

5 percent - performance measure of cost per mile*.

*Until TX DOT uniforms the data gathering of other performance measures and each rural public transit operator is funded comparable to other operators, performance factors such as percent of population served, number of trips provided or any other like factor would not be appropriate.

The revised funding formula should be fully implemented over a five year period.

Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

50 percent population - The federal government allocates the Federal Rural Transit funds based solely on rural population. Therefore, it should be a major factor in the state funding formula.

35 percent population density - It is a well know fact that the cost per trip in a less dense populated area is higher. Areas of West and South Texas would benefit on this aspect. The service areas with lower population density should receive additional funds to serve their area. They have to travel longer distances to take their riders to Medical appointments, education, and shopping.

5 percent economic disadvantaged population.

5 Percent elderly and disabled population - These three categories reflect the majority of ridership in the Rural Public Transportation Program.

5 percent cost per mile - Most of the comments made last summer and this past month indicate that there needs to be a performance measure in the formula. In our opinion, as stated above, this is the only fair performance measure. Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. At best it is poor!! Not enough public transportation or enough ways to access it, for our four counties we are putting projects in. Sad to say most poor women and children will not have the opportunities to seek higher education, alternative job skills, mentoring programs because of lack of affordable transportation. When will Washington wake up to the fact they cannot let rural America die on the vine?

Omega Ann Hawkins, Kaufman

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. As a large county rural provider of public transportation the following make up time and expense factors we have to consider in planning and budgeting for our transportation.

Questions to ask and compare to population;

1. What is the percentage of riders in wheelchairs?
2. What is the percentage of riders needing the very off times (such as 5:00 a.m. and after 10:00 p.m. for work; low income persons are hired for these shifts)?
3. What is the percentage of unduplicated riders to population?
4. What is the percentage of the population being provided transportation?
5. What is the density of riders in each part of the county?

For years KART was the only provider in the county. Dependable transportation was provided to everyone, and then the Medicaid contract was given to a taxi company out of Dallas. It is incomprehensible for a taxi from Dallas to take Ms. Smith to dialysis in Terrell on Monday and then on every other day KART takes Ms. Smith to all of her appointments and gives her support in providing for her transit needs.

PLEASE RETURN THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CONTRACT TO THE TRANSIT PROVIDER THAT CAN DO THE COMPLETE JOB FOR THE TRANSIT NEEDY IN OUR COUNTY.

There is an urgency in incorporating the Health and Human Services funding into the current formula.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None.

James Pike, Rusk County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. We recommend the following change to the Rural Public Transportation Funding Formula:

- 50 percent - rural population,
- 35 percent - population density,
- 5 percent - economic disadvantaged population.
- 5 percent - elderly and disabled population, and
- 5 percent - performance measure of cost per mile*.

*Until TX DOT unifies the data gathering of other performance measures and each rural public transit operator is funded comparable to other operators, performance factors such as percent of population served, number of trips provided or any other like factor would not be appropriate.

The revised funding formula should be fully implemented over a five year period.

Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

50 percent population - The federal government allocates the Federal Rural Transit funds based solely on rural population. Therefore, it should be a major factor in the state funding formula.

35 percent population density - It is a well known fact that the cost per trip in a less dense populated area is higher. Areas of West and South Texas would benefit on this aspect. The service areas with lower population density should receive additional funds to serve their area. They have to travel longer distances to take their riders to Medical appointments, education, and shopping.

5 percent economic disadvantaged population.

5 Percent elderly and disabled population - These three categories reflect the majority of ridership in the Rural Public Transportation Program.

5 percent cost per mile - Most of the comments made last summer and this past month indicate that there needs to be a performance measure in the formula. In our opinion, as stated above, this is the only fair performance measure. Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Minibus serving 14 counties in East Texas including Rusk County is severely under-funded. A recent survey shows that 93 percent of the population needing public transportation in Rusk County had not heard or Minibus. It would not do much good for Minibus to advertise because with there current funding level they can not increase the number of buses and drivers that would be needed for the increase of ridership.

Dennis Kutach, Tyler, Smith County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I'm not really sure how to answer this question, but achieving greater equity in the distribution of state and federal dollars and to meet the actual cost+ so providers can continue to provide good service. Prioritizing accountability by identifying state transit priorities and tracking performance.

Provide incentive innovation and reward for efficiency, coordination, and superlative performance

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I am a member of the board for MiniBus, Inc. in Tyler which serves 13-14 counties, depending on our contract. We have just dropped the Medicaid Contract due to the fact that we were losing money from them and having to subsidize ourselves from other providers. The State requirements are sometimes overwhelming and therefore the procedures for payment, etc, really need to be streamlined/updated, etc.

No Name Provided, Tyler, Smith County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

- Rural Population
- Size of District
- Poverty Level
- Number of seniors
- Current Available Providers

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I am primarily concerned with rural transportation. Currently, the rural provider is massively under-funded.

People in rural areas have been traditionally underserved. Now is the time to invest some time and energy into their needs.

Roxanne McKinley, Gregg County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. We recommend the following change to the Rural Public Transportation Funding Formula:

- 50 percent - rural population,
- 35 percent - population density,
- 5 percent - economic disadvantaged population.
- 5 percent - elderly and disabled population, and
- 5 percent - performance measure of cost per mile*.

*Until TX DOT unifies the data gathering of other performance measures and each rural public transit operator is funded comparable to other operators, performance factors such as percent of population served, number of trips provided or any other like factor would not be appropriate.

The revised funding formula should be fully implemented over a five year period.

Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

50 percent population - The federal government allocates the Federal Rural Transit funds based solely on rural population. Therefore, it should be a major factor in the state funding formula.

35 percent population density - It is a well known fact that the cost per trip in a less dense populated area is higher. Areas of West and South Texas would benefit on this aspect. The service areas with lower population density should receive additional funds to serve their area. They have to travel longer distances to take their riders to Medical appointments, education, and shopping.

5 percent economic disadvantaged population.

5 Percent elderly and disabled population - These three categories reflect the majority of ridership in the Rural Public Transportation Program.

5 percent cost per mile - Most of the comments made last summer and this past month indicate that there needs to be a performance measure in the formula. In our opinion, as stated above, this is the only fair performance measure. Reasoning for the suggested formula and weights:

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None.

Randy Mansfield, Leary, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Send the dollars to the areas where customer usage is higher and agency's overseeing the programs have shown the most efficient use of prior funding.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None.

Morris County Judge, Daingerfield, Morris County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Transit districts are committed to continued input from consumers on our services, after all that is what we are in business to do, serve the public. Our success depends on customer satisfaction. If there are suggestions on how to improve that process, we are always open to ideas. Consumers and their advocates should be most concerned about the lack of funding to effectively market and deploy needed services.

TxDOT should engage the services of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to scientifically inventory the level of service provided by each transit district so that quantitative decisions can be made for funding needs of each district and for the state as a whole, and a plan can be developed to meet those needs.

An inventory of the amounts and categories of human service transportation funding and service needs should also be commissioned from TTI so that informed decisions can be made by TxDOT in assuming its new responsibilities.

TxDOT should ensure there is no interruption or disruption in funding for districts by adopting the formula allocation procedures that were in place prior to their repeal in the last legislative session as an interim distribution mechanism. This mechanism will remain in place until the results of the service inventory and studies cited above are completed, the results analyzed, and a plan is adopted pursuant to the findings.

Human services transportation funding administered by TxDOT should be used to build all transit districts' ability to serve all citizens with one community transportation system. This should be done through interlocal agreement with the appropriate accountability built into the system to satisfy state and federal requirements with respect to the human services funds and those assurances necessary to ensure clients access to the system. There should be one transportation system for all Texans.

Texas has been nationally recognized for its advances in transit services. TxDOT should call on the transit industry for peer assistance to advance a service model that can help those Districts that need it in the integration of human service and public transportation. To-date all decisions and deliberations have been made without any industry collaboration. The view that we have a vested interest in funding decisions so we should not be consulted begs the question of how we set about improving service delivery across the state.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None provided.

James M. Carlow, New Boston, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. I feel it is very important to take into consideration past performance in the funding formula. This requirement should encourage quality customer service.
2. You should establish a financial incentive bonus program to reward systems that successfully coordinate with other entities to pool resources in order to increase access to mobility across their region.
3. The formula should increase funding to all transportation systems by integrating Human Services funding currently available to TxDOT through House Bill (HB) 3588 into the existing public transit network in Texas.
4. This type formula should result in a general public transportation system that serves everyone, regardless of whom is paying for their trips.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I am the Judge for Bowie County and a member of the Board of Ark-Tex Council of Governments Rural Public Transit District. Bowie County presently receives rural public transportation services with citizens receiving services on a daily basis. This program is a huge success and I am extremely pleased with the services provided.

HB 3184 requires the department to adopt a funding formula effective September 1, 2004. I feel the formula in place at this time should be adopted as a temporary formula, which is not prohibited by either HB 3588 or HB 3184. This would allow time to inventory and evaluate all the Health and Human Services transportation funding that was transferred to the department in HB 3588 in order to integrate that funding into the final formula. I believe this would result in an overall transportation plan that would not cut funding to any system, but would provide services to the betterment of all Texans.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment and encourage you to adopt this strategy.

Owetta Wilson, Texarkana, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. The funding formula should increase the funds to existing transit districts by integration of the HB 3588 funds with Health and Human Services to create a seamless delivery of services.
2. The formula should include past performance as an incentive to transit districts to provide the best possible services available to all citizens.
3. The funding formula should include factors to ensure a fair allocation of funds to all existing transit districts.
4. The funding formula should ensure existing transit districts do not receive a funding cut.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We are a rural transit district in Northeast Texas serving a population of 310,911 citizens in a nine county region.

We recommend the current funding formula remain in place until the new funding formula is finalized.

We feel no need to contract with a mobility broker. The funding formula should encourage transit districts to coordinate services without any outside agency involvement.

Lynda Woods Pugh, Texarkana, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. The formula should increase funding to all existing Transit Districts by integrating Human Services funding currently available to TxDOT through House Bill (HB) 3588 into the existing public transportation districts in Texas.
2. The formula should include past performance as a way to encourage systems to provide quality customer service.
3. The formula should result in a general public system that serves everyone regardless of whom is paying for the trips.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. HB3184 requires the department to adopt a funding formula effective September 1, 2004. I feel the formula in place at this time should be adopted as a temporary formula, which is not prohibited. This would allow time to inventory and evaluate all the Health and Human Services transportation funding into the final formula. I believe this would result in an overall transportation plan that would not cut funding to any existing transportation district, but would provide services to the betterment of all Texans. I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Tom King, Flint, Smith County, My organization also serves counties throughout Northeast Texas

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. We ask the department and commission to develop rules revising the rural and small urban transit funding formula that incorporate the following principles.

- Achieves a level of equity in the distribution of state and federal funding determined by (1) the needs of transit customers and communities statewide, (2) the performance of transit systems, and (3) the population served by the district.
- Identifies state wide goals for coordination of transit resources and provides a mechanism for tracking performance of transit systems and operators and for documenting their progress toward achieving state and local goals for the coordination of transit resources.
- Includes a mechanism for rewarding transit systems that excel in achieving state and local transit goals and that demonstrate creativity, efficiency and exceptional

performance by the transit provider. This mechanism MUST encourage broad consumer participation in process of designing and implementing transit system plans for expansion and improvement.

- Develops benchmarks for coordination including aggressively rewarding transit districts that provide consumer-based coordination through a TxDOT promoted regional mobility management approach.
- Does not lock the formula into a rigid “split” between rural and small urban systems, but recognizes the regional character of rural/small urban transportation and encourages systems to provide services outside of invisible political boundaries and allows for flexibility in the funding formula to accommodate both local differences and a smooth transition.
- Achieves parity between the “have” and “have-not” rural/small urban transit districts that does not penalize “late-start” systems because they lack expertise and political “clout.” The formula should encourage providers in under-served areas to ramp up operations to a level that adequately serves their populations with incentives to increase provider training and provides community development resources needed in under-served areas that will help them develop a consumer oriented system
- TxDOT must send a clear message to providers that customer service has to be #1. No longer can transit providers operate with a philosophy that says (and I’m quoting a transit provider here) “We do not have to make our customers happy. They have to make us happy or they do not get a ride!”

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area.

- East Texas is the second largest COG based rural transit district in the state and receives the smallest appropriation
- There are more than a quarter million in the region that report having serious disabilities (about one-in-five).
- The region has 6 percent more seniors (16 percent of our total population) than the rest of the state. By 2010, that number is expected to reach 1 in 4 (25 percent). We do not have alternative transportation resources to meet what could potentially become a transit disaster.
- The region has 38 colonias. A ride to town to go shopping from a colonia costs \$40 cash or \$80 in food stamps and is provided by illegal “jitney bus” operators because no transit serves these poor communities.
- The region has two rural and three small urban transit providers and they DO NOT CONNECT! There is little coordination and the COG’s transit director deliberately does not advertise or market the availability of rural transit services to prevent the service being “flooded.”

- Small nonprofits that had been providing program related transit have lost access to 5310 funding in the past three years and are beginning to face the possibility that they might have to close their doors as their vans age out and rural transit providers (who received their former share of 5310 funding) have been unable to provide services to adequately replace the transportation services the agencies provide.
- The region has created a regional task force to address the problem of coordination in our area. Small local initiatives have been encouraged to bring their issues to the regional task force and solutions are happening

I represent a coalition of more than 20 agencies and individuals who are transit stakeholders. I am executive director of a nonprofit agency which would not be able to provide one entire program if it were not for public transit bringing our clients to us. Transit operators are not the only ones who care about this issue. It would be a tragic mistake if TxDOT lost this opportunity to change the way we do things. Transportation coordination must not be about moving buses! It must be about moving people! Unless TxDOT provides leadership and direction, unless the DOT shows us all the way by creating a formula and a plan for the future that embraces a people first approach to coordination, that recognizes the unique challenges faced by rural/small urban transit and that creates an open/transparent process for getting a ride, we're going to wind up with more of the same old "it's all about the buses" approach that has resulted in the systematic isolation of our elders, people with disabilities and low income families.

We are involved with other transportation alliances throughout the state through Just Transportation Alliance. TxDOT has access to a huge consumer and transit provider cooperative network in working with JTA. I would encourage you to actively involve the local alliances in this process. ETJTA here in East Texas is already holding meetings with local officials, consumers and transit providers in preparation for the upcoming PTAC meetings. Please encourage this kind of consumer participation throughout the state so we can create a process that will go as far as humanly possible to provide transportation resources for the one-in-five Texans who do not have access to a car.

Jerry Sparks/Northeast Texas Economic Development District, Texarkana, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

- A. Formula should include consideration of past performance as a means to encourage Rural Transit Districts to continue quality customer service.
- B. Formula should attempt to result in a public system that serves everyone regardless of which funding source is paying for their trips.
- C. Formula should attempt to increase funding to all Rural Transit Districts by including Human Services funds available to TxDOT through HB3588 into existing transit system in Texas.

- D. Consider establishing incentive bonus to reward Rural Transit Districts that successfully coordinate with other entities to pool resources resulting in increased mobility across their regions.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. None provided.

Genevieve Burtchell, Texarkana, Bowie County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. To encourage systems to provide quality customer service, past performance should be taken into consideration when devising the funding formula.
2. All citizens should be served with one transportation system. The formula should integrate Human Services funding currently available to TxDOT through HB 3588 into the existing transit districts.
3. The current formula should be adopted as a temporary formula effective September 1, 2004. This will give TxDOT time to thoroughly evaluate all the transportation funding that is being transferred in HB 3588 and devise a final funding formula.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Past performance should be an important consideration when devising the new funding formula for the transit districts. Those districts who have successfully performed in the past should not be penalized and receive funding cuts. This allows those districts to continue to provide quality service to the public.

HB 3184 requires that TxDOT adopt a funding formula by September 1, 2004. If the current formula is adopted as a temporary formula, TxDOT would have time to inventory all of the HHS transportation funding available that was transferred in HB 3588 and include that funding in a final funding formula. This could result in no transportation district receiving a funding cut.

Bradley Ford, Tyler, Smith County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

- 35 percent land area.
- 35 percent population,
- 10 percent disabled population,
- 10 percent elderly population,
- 5 percent residents under poverty line, and
- 5 percent for historically under-funded regions.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I have been a part of public transportation research projects in the following East Texas counties: Smith, Gregg, Rusk, Wood, Anderson, Cherokee, Van Zandt, and Henderson.

The East Texas region has been traditionally under-funded to the point that East Texans are paying for “transportation” in food stamps. East Texans are driving their scooters on busy roads. East Texans are walking for hours to get to job training at workforce centers. East Texans do not have access to rural/public transportation.

Now I am not asking for any type of “Robin Hood” scenario where Brazos Transit or all the urban districts lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know that there are districts receiving adequate funding, but I am sure they are doing great things with that funding. I am asking that growth in funding levels be limited, if not stopped, until rural districts can be elevated to equitable levels.

Please do not put off changes, just fix the problem of inequity over a reasonable amount of time, which I believe should be substantially less than the five years others have suggested.

Debbie Bernard, Chandler, Henderson County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Parity based on need, population density and miles traveled.

Historically-based formulas smell of old time politics. East Texas COG was not one of the first to establish rural transit in Texas and is therefore in the basement of the “silo.” That is no reason to penalize the citizens forever.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I work with individuals who have disabilities, have neighbors and family members with disabilities, and know the problems they have in my area of the state obtaining safe and affordable public transportation. Although public funding will never meet all needs we at least need sufficient funds to plan and coordinate rural transportation that can meet at least the most basic of needs. That can only happen with more funding for our rural transit district and the most equitable way is for reformulation to be based on a formula that does not reduce funding for our small urban systems as well. We in East Texas do appreciate the opportunity that TxDOT is taking to consider reformulation.

Sandra Hughes, Henderson, Rusk County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Population and density.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. This is in regard to the Rural Public Transportation Funding Formula – I would think that TXDOT could look at the amount for ETCOG and at least explain why we are the lowest funded rural area while we are second largest in population and density.

WACO DISTRICT

Attendees

W. R. Harman, HOTCOG
Reggie Richardson, TxDOT Waco District
Ed Kabobel, TxDOT Waco District
John Hendrickson, Waco Transit

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the Waco District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

WICHITA FALLS DISTRICT

Attendees

Carolyn H. Askins, TxDOT Wichita Falls District
Lin Barnett, City of Wichita Falls
Larry Blowers, City of Wichita Falls

Speaker Comments

No individuals from the Wichita Falls District provided comments.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

YOAKUM DISTRICT

Attendees

Basilio Jimenez, Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
Lisa Cortinas, Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
Vastene Olier, Colorado Valley Transit
Claudia Wicks, Colorado Valley Transit
Ella Bess, Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
Wanda Carter, TxDOT Yoakum District

Speaker Comments

Ella Bess, Council Woman from Goliad

Good afternoon. Our main concern in Goliad is that we do not have enough transportation for our elderly, especially our dialysis patients. Some patients have to leave about 6:00 a.m. to travel to different areas like San Antonio and Victoria. My main concern about that is we need more transportation in our cities so that we won't have to have well patients going with the patients who have to have dialysis and stay all day. By the time they go with them and come back they are just as sick as the dialysis patients are. Thank you.

Vastene Olier, Executive Director, Colorado Valley Transit

We serve Austin, Colorado, Waller, and Wharton counties. We border Harris County. We have had the pleasure of providing service for 17 years and I would like to thank TxDOT for allowing us this opportunity. I also was recently appointed to the Public Transportation Advisory Committee.

I have listened very closely to the different things that have been said tonight, particularly the comments about funding because that is tied to basically the core of all we do. I heard the comment about funding being inadequate, about it being stable. I have heard people say they need more funding. I think we can all agree that we need more funding. I think this a good opportunity for us to do some serious housekeeping. The housekeeping has to do with listening very closely to comments that we will be receiving at these types of meetings and in future meetings and compiling all that information in terms of an assessment of needs. Once you have got those needs, you have to match it with money. We had an opportunity with coordination of agencies to do that. We have been there for a long time with a lot of areas that have no service at all. We have had some that have just been staying at the same level. We have a whole host of issues to deal with in public transportation.

This is an opportunity I hope to slow this process down. I know that we are looking at a timeline. I see us rushing to provide a formula and I think we are getting it a little bit out of order. However, I am willing to work with everyone in terms of what can be accomplished out of this. But the opportunity is certainly at the table now for us to develop something that will be beneficial to all citizens of the state of Texas. If it was not obvious to me before tonight, just listening to all the different needs that exist, has been good. That information in itself is very valuable. I do look forward to this opportunity. I hope that we will hear from a lot of you by way of the meetings, by e-mail, by letters. We welcome that opportunity. Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

None.

Comments Received Via the Internet

None.

CHAPTER FOUR – LISTENING SESSIONS

HOUSTON LISTENING SESSION

University of Houston – Sugarland, February 19, 2004

Attendees

Ricky Broussard, Connect Coordinating Council
Susan Berkeley, Connect Coordinating Council
Paulette Shelton, Connect Transit
Vastene Olier, Colorado Valley Transit
Cynthia King, The Arc of Fort Bend County
José Ramirez, Mental Health Mental Retardation of Harris County
Tom Jenson, Houston METRO
Lyle Nelson, Brazos Transit
David Leathem, Texana Mental Health Mental Retardation
Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizen Fund
Janet Redeker, TREK, Transportation Management Association
Linda Harris, Fort Bend County Commissioner, Precinct 4
Doris Johnson, Career and Recovery Resources
Susan Bryant, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Don Henderson, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Bobby Killebrew, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Lucy Lapaglia, TxDOT, Houston District
Darryl Puckett, Texas Transportation Institute
Katie Turnbull, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Ricky Broussard, Connect Coordinating Council

I use the transit service in the area for all types of trips. Many people use the service to go to work, for medical appointments, and for other trip purposes. Brazoria, Angleton, and Fort Bend Counties cover a very large area and the population continues to grow.

I would like to see more funding for transit in this area. More service is needed to meet the growing demand. Many people have not had the opportunity to use the service. Funding is needed for new buses. Many buses have a lot of miles because they are used so much.

We need more funding for additional service and for new buses. More people need the service. The only way we can expand service is with more buses and additional funding. Thank you.

Janet Redeker, Director, TREK. Transportation Management Association

TREK is a private-non-profit transportation management association (TMA). We operate transit service for employers in the Greenway Plaza area and the Uptown/Galleria area. I am

here because we operate a bus route from Fort Bend County to Greenway Plaza. There are two major points I would like to make this evening.

First, Fort Bend County is the largest county in the area after Harris County. Fort Bend is the fastest growing county in the area. As a result, the county needs more transportation of all types, especially transit services for the elderly and disabled individuals. There is service in the area and there are good efforts to coordinate services among the different providers, but additional funding and more vehicles are needed to meet the growing demands.

Second, Houston is comprised of many large employment centers. Major employment centers include downtown Houston, the Texas Medical Center (TMC), Greenway Plaza, and the Uptown/Galleria area. The demographics of the people who work at those four centers indicate some interesting trends. Approximately 100,000 people work in the Greenway Plaza and Uptown/Galleria areas. Approximately 35 percent of those workers, or 35,000 people, live in Fort Bend County.

The only transit service for those workers is provided by TREK. We contract for the service, which provides 12 trips in the morning and 12 trips in the evening, using 30 passenger buses. We make about 6,000 trips a month.

Approximately 45 percent of the some 80,000 workers at the TMC live in Fort Bend County and some 30 percent of the downtown workers live in Fort Bend County. With the exception of Missouri City, Fort Bend County is not in the Houston METRO service area. So, most of Fort Bend County is not served by METRO.

Fort Bend County needs commuter transit service. The County needs federal and state funding for the service. We have been asked to provide more service and different types of services, but we do not have available funding. Our current service is operated primarily with funding from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. When the 3-year CMAQ funded project ends, we would like Fort Bend County to take over the service, if possible, and expand the service.

I hope the state will examine the two major transit needs in Fort Bend County. These needs are services for the elderly and disabled individuals, and commuter services to the major employment centers in Houston.

I want to make it clear that I am not asking for funding for TREK. Fort Bend County would need funding if it wanted to take over the existing route and start other routes. Also, when TREK requested bids from providers to operate the route, we received only two proposals. I think there is a need for more bus operators in this area. I am not sure what influence TxDOT or the state can have on this situation, but there may be some things that can be done to encourage more providers.

Lyle Nelson, Brazos Transit

Brazos Transit is the largest and the oldest rural transit property in the state. We began operation as an elderly and disabled human service transit provider in 1974 and were one of the very first to receive a Section 18 Rural Public Transportation grant in 1980. We are a grantee for

both rural and small urban transit and are well qualified to comment on what direction the funding formula should take.

It is our position that before a formula is developed, the department should determine the goals of the formula. What is the result you wish to achieve for all Texans? If we do not clearly articulate where we want to be, then the result is going to be a road that meanders here and there and does not end up where we want to be.

Before any formula is contemplated, the department should contract with the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to complete an inventory of the transit services currently provided by each of the rural and small urban transit systems.

At The District, our goal has always been to provide the highest quality and quantity of transit service to everyone within the resources available. We have built one system for everyone, not a system for social service clients, another for the disabled, and another for the general public.

Our Board of Directors and the elected officials we represent recommend that the department adopt the following goals:

- Any formula should result in a general public system that serves everyone, regardless of whom is paying for their trips.
- The formula should increase funding to all systems by integrating human service funding currently to TxDOT through HB 3588 into the existing public transit network in Texas.
- No existing system should lose funding. Past formula proposals have been predicated on older systems losing funding to increase funding to newer systems. Why should entire sections of the state which had the foresight to develop and financially support public transit in the beginning be penalized just because we have been in business longer?
- A financial incentive bonus program should be established to reward systems like The District which successfully coordinate with other entities to pool resources to increase access to mobility across their region.

The commission currently allocates 10 percent of the federal and state appropriations at its own discretion. Those funds should be used to immediately increase funding to those districts which the commission currently considers to be under-funded.

House Bill 3184 requires the department to adopt a formula effective September 1, 2004. That date appears to be driving the schedule in this formula process. There is nothing in HB 3588 or HB 3184 which prohibits the department from adopting the current formula as a temporary formula. This approach would give the department time to inventory and evaluate all the health and human services transportation funding which was transferred to the department in HB 3588 and integrate that funding into a final funding formula. This approach would result in

no funding cuts for systems and would provide a comprehensive, well planned, statewide transportation plan for all Texans. We urge the department to adopt this strategy.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

José Ramirez, Mental Health Mental Retardation of Harris County

My name is José Ramirez and I work at MHMR of Harris County. One of my responsibilities is to coordinate the transportation needs at MHMR. Other speakers have noted the transportation needs of commuters, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. It is also important not to forget about the transportation needs of individuals with behavioral disabilities, both cognitive and mental.

Harris County is so large that it is difficult to provide needed transit services to individuals with behavioral disabilities. When these individuals graduate from high school it is said they receive a “diploma to nowhere.” Transportation is required by law to be provided to these individuals only up to the age of 21. Individuals with behavioral disabilities cross all age groups.

Providing transportation to this group is very challenging, especially when the legislature develops a system to try to bring in as much federal funding as possible and uses a fee for services approach. The problem is that the fees are so low we cannot find any providers willing to operate service at such a low cost. This situation puts the burden of providing transit on social service agencies who simply do not have the resources. What is happening is a cyclical pattern where more and more funds are being spent on highways and not enough resources are being devoted to provide the vehicles and the services to transport individuals with disabilities to work, medical treatments, and other normal activities that allow them to live with dignity and respect. Thank you.

WACO LISTENING SESSION

Waco Transit Intermodal Center, February 23, 2004

Attendees

Bertha Jane Polstron
James Van Zandt
Sheila Webb
Larry Webb
Lydia Mendoza
Vance Seversen
Margie Gonzales
John Gonzales, Jr.
Norman Friedel
Olaf Orenson
Carole Warlick, Hill County Transit District (HCTD)
Jonas Schwartz, Advocacy Incorporated
John Hendrickson, Waco Transit
Allen Hernandez, Greyhound

Dave Marsh, Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)
Glenn Gadbois, Just Transportation Alliance
Russ Harman, Heart of Texas Council of Governments/Rural Transit District
Vernon Lebo, Sr.
Michael Valdez
Ingrid Forward
Matt Penney, Waco Transit
Bobby Killebrew, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Don Henderson, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Ginnie Grayson, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Katie Turnbull, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Sheila Webb and Larry Webb

Bus service in Waco should be provided later in the evening on weekdays. Many people have no other means of transportation and they need buses to run later. For those of us who work and use the bus, there is no service available to complete errands after work.

More service is also needed on Saturday and Sunday. Adding service on Sunday would help people with no other means of transportation. Many people would be willing to pay higher fares for more service.

Lydia Mendoza

There should be less talk. There is a need for more bus service in Waco.

Vance Seversen

Buses should run later in the evening during the weekday. More Sunday service is needed in Waco. While I would not mind paying higher fares for more service, many people are not able to pay more. The headways are also long on many routes. If you miss a bus or have to transfer, you might end up waiting an hour for the next bus. I think buses operating every 30 minutes would be good.

John Gonzales, Jr.

More Sunday service should be provided in Waco. Shuttles should run further out into neighborhoods. More shuttles should be provided to serve different areas.

Norman Friedel

I serve as chair of the Waco Transit Board. My comment is that the funding formula TxDOT uses should be equitable.

Olaf Orenson

I thought this meeting was going to be a question and answer session. I would like to know if there are any proposals for more services. I agree with the previous speakers about the need to extend service in the evenings and to add service on Sunday.

Carole Warlick, Hill County Transit District

My name is Carole Warlick and I am the General Manager of the Hill County Transit District in San Saba. We operate in nine counties – Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, Milam, Mills, and San Saba. We also provide service in Temple and Killeen.

The transit providers are very concerned about the funding formula and the process TxDOT is using because we want to be sure that we continue to meet the needs of our customers and that there are no interruptions in service. The process should not be rushed. The Texas Transit Association (TTA) has developed a position paper on the funding formula that I would like to read.

Transit districts are committed to continued input from consumers about our services, after all that is what we are in business to do, serve the public. Our success depends on customer satisfaction. If there are suggestions on how to improve that process we are always open to ideas. Consumers and their advocates should be most concerned about the lack of funding to effectively market and deploy needed services.

There are transit districts that are under-funded, and we think that TxDOT should immediately take steps to assist those districts by releasing the 10 percent set-aside for commission selected projects to those districts that demonstrate the need for additional funding.

TxDOT should engage the services of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to scientifically inventory the level of service provided by each transit district so that quantitative decisions can be made for funding needs of each district and for the state as a whole, and a plan can be developed to meet those needs.

An inventory of the amounts and categories of human service transportation funding and service needs should also be commissioned from TTI so that informed decisions can be made by TxDOT in assuming its new responsibilities.

TxDOT should ensure there is no interruption or disruption in funding for districts by adopting the formula allocation procedures that were in place prior to their repeal in the last legislative session as an interim distribution mechanism. This mechanism will remain in place until the results of the service inventory and studies cited above are completed, the results analyzed, and a plan is adopted pursuant to the findings.

Human service transportation funding administered by TxDOT should be used to build all transit districts' ability to serve all citizens with one community transportation system. This should be done through interlocal agreements with the appropriate accountability built into the system to satisfy state and federal requirements with respect to the human service funds and those assurances necessary to ensure clients access to the system. There should be one transportation system for all Texans.

Texas has been nationally recognized for its advances in transit services. TxDOT should call on the transit industry for peer assistance to advance a service model that can help those districts that need it in the integration of human service and public transportation. To date all decisions and deliberations have been made without any industry collaboration. The view that we have a vested interest in funding decisions so we should not be consulted begs the question of how we set about improving service delivery across the state.

In summary, we urge TxDOT to allow an appropriate amount of time to obtain industry input and to review current formulas and funding. Public transit services should not be disrupted by service reductions, driver layoffs, etc., in an interim period, only to come back a year or so later when health and human services funding comes into play, and try and regain what has been lost. This undermines the credibility of systems that has taken years to build and is a huge disservice to our customers.

Finally, I would like to add this. We, as transit operators, must be very careful not to let the funding formula discussion become a divisive issue between operators. Let's not get caught up in who has more money and who has been around the longest or the least amount of time. Rather we should focus on what our purpose is – to meet the needs of the people in our communities and focus on addressing how to meet that need and how to best utilize all available funding resources in a way that will be beneficial to all systems and the customers we serve.

Thank you.

Jonas Schwartz, Advocacy Incorporated

My name is Jonas Schwartz. I am with Advocacy Incorporated and I appreciate the opportunity to provide some comments this evening. My comments focus on the funding formula and regional service planning. This past legislative session brought a lot of changes in the way transit in the state will be organized and operated. I think the legislature had a good deal of foresight in moving all the pieces into one place, if you will, so that we can take all the limited resources and try to make them as efficient as possible for all the people who need them. Transit is key to people being able to participate in their communities and to take advantage of every aspect of daily life.

It is a new day for TxDOT. I think the message was clearly sent by the legislature that TxDOT should start doing business differently. The development of the regional service plans is an example of this new direction. The development of these plans is an opportunity to begin doing business differently. It is an opportunity for TxDOT to bring consumers and stakeholders to the table to participate in the development of the funding formula and the regional service plans. It is important to hear from people who use transit and have them be a part of developing the plans, as opposed to developing the plans and putting them forward and having people comment on them. You will get buy-in from your constituencies a lot easier if they are involved early in the process rather than at the end. They will bring a lot to the table.

It will serve TxDOT well in the long run if they have a large group of constituents from diverse communities, including the aging population, people with disabilities, people who use transit to go to work, and other groups. If these individuals have a hand in developing these plans, then when the time comes to approach the legislature to request more funding, I believe

TxDOT will have a group of dedicated stakeholders that they can rely on to take the message forward on the importance of transit and what it means to their community.

I think the idea of the videoconference as part of the listening sessions was very innovative. However, there were some kinks in the process that will definitely need to be worked out. For example, 21 of the locations were in non-metropolitan areas where either the physical building was not accessible, the location was not on a transit route, or the transit service was not available late enough to allow people to participate in the session. I think using the videoconference was a great idea, but there are some problems that need to be worked out for future use.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

John Hendrickson, Waco Transit

I think the state of Texas is in a perfect position right now to be a national leader in transportation. I find it hard to believe that the funding formula can be based on performance factors when you consider Title 6 and the equal distribution of funds for transportation. My biggest concern is that if you start looking at performance factors, then people are going to develop service based on the different reporting performance factors rather than developing and operating service based on the needs of the public.

I am concerned when funding formulas are based solely on performance factors. Performance measures could be used as incentives or something on the back end of the formula. Starting with performance factors on the front side of the formula can be a help and a hindrance. In the long run, I think it will be more of a hindrance because providers will focus on operating services only to meet the performance factors, not to meet the needs of different user groups. I think if we can better coordinate Americans with Disabilities (ADA) service and health and human services transportation, we can realize some efficiencies and maximize available funding.

I also think we should look at the rate-of-return associated with transit services. This approach would consider how much money is brought back in terms of the total operating recovery ration, fare box recovery ratio, advertising revenues, contract services revenues, and local funding. TxDOT should consider how much funding transit systems generate and how it benefits communities. There may be some aspects of transportation that could be looked at regardless of the size of the system. These factors should be considered on the back side of the formula, however. If factors are on the front side of the formula, providers will only focus on service to meet those measures, not on service that is needed by different groups.

Thank you.

Dave Marsh, Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS)

My name is Dave Marsh and I am the Director of the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS), headquartered in Austin. I would be interested to hear more about the ideas Jonas described related to development of the regional service plans. The suggestions related to involvement of different stakeholder groups are great. We sometimes have a tendency to think that because we are involved in providing service we know all the needs of our customers. We all can benefit from listening to our customers, who we are in business to serve.

It is important for all groups to put their cards on the table. There should not be any secrets among the parties involved in trying to arrive at a better transportation system for Texas. In my observation, however, there seems to be two or three different rails going down the track and we are not communicating to the extent that would allow for better collaboration. Texas has a splendid opportunity to remake how people move throughout the state. There is no way to underestimate the potential we have right now.

Texas receives relatively small amounts of federal funding for rural and small urban transit services. It is a large amount when compared to other states, however. Texas receives the largest rural transit service allocation of any state in the country. While federal funding is not enough, it provides a base to work with. The infusion of health and human services funding into TxDOT should increase the amount of available funding by five or six fold. This situation provides opportunities to blend and mix resources so that everyone can be better served with one system. The tendency to communicate among interest groups is something we need to get away from. When you go on vacation, the first thing you do is plan your trip. You do not just get in your car and start driving. You plan where you want to go and how you want to get there. Unfortunately, I am afraid the process right now is more like just getting in a car and driving, rather than planning where we want to go.

TxDOT is trying to comply with the legislative mandate it has been given. I understand the difficulty of this task. However, to move forward with a funding formula before you analyze, evaluate, and quantify the amount of human services funding available to compliment the current transit services seems to be a big mistake. The two elements seem to be interlinked. If you are going to build a transportation system for Texas you should evaluate your inventory, your resources, and your current services. This information is needed before you make a decision on the funding formula. In my opinion, to make a decision on the funding formula before you have all the facts is a waste of resources and a waste of the opportunity before us.

TxDOT has five or six times more funds under their purview to apply to the job. TxDOT has the federal transit funds, the state transit funds, and the health and human services funds. Obviously, some of the health and human services funds have to be used outside the transit community. If we can blend and set-up brokerage systems and mobility managers to move people with buses, intercity buses, trains, and other methods we will have a much better opportunity to accomplish something grand.

There are 41 rural transit districts, 28 small urban systems, and 7 metropolitan transit authorities in the state. Every one of these systems is doing the best job it can every day to serve the public based on available funding. If there is a way to bring everyone into the equation and talk with them, rather than talking at them, I think we can get to the same place together in a positive fashion.

Please consider backing off the current formal setting schedule. Please consider the regional planning process, including an inventory of existing assets and sources. Please do these things before you change the funding formula. Please do not disrupt what is currently in place.

There are transit systems that need more funding. TxDOT should immediately release all available discretionary funds to help systems that need additional resources. If there are problems out there, they should be fixed. TxDOT has the resources to release sufficient funds to

patch a lot of major problems so that adequate time can be spent evaluating a longer term solution to what we all want together – a system that is responsive to consumer needs and a system that is seamless with connections among rural, small urban, metropolitan, and intercity services. Working together we can make this vision happen.

Thank you.

Glenn Gadbois, Just Transportation Alliance

Thank you. It appears most of you came here this evening because you are interested in more transit service in Waco. Like me, you probably do not understand all of the discussion related to the funding formula. It is critically important for you to say you want better transit and to identify the types of improvements you would like to see, such as more evening and Sunday service.

The discussion on the funding formula is really an inside conversation among TxDOT and the transit providers in the state. Currently, funds are distributed inequitably. Some systems get more due to historical resources. Now the legislature has told TxDOT to fix this situation. All of the systems are wondering how they will come out with a new formula.

Coming here and saying that transit is important to you is a big deal and you should all be commended for taking the time to participate in this meeting. I would encourage you to keep participating in discussions and meetings related to transit service needs.

My message is that we all have to work together to make things better. We need to work with the transit agencies to help them understand how they can serve us better as customers. The transit agencies need to work with us to improve customer services. If that works, we will have a relationship upon which we all move forward.

If a transit agency involves you in the planning process for more service, you are more likely to support them in seeking additional funding for those improvements. What has happened so far is that TxDOT and the transit operators are looking at the funding formula issue without involving consumers. I would encourage you to follow the process, because although it may be difficult to understand the funding formula, everything works off of the formula. Transit systems can not add service if they do not have funding.

It is important to note that the transit providers have said that they do not want to take funding from one system to give to another. That is a valuable proposition, but if there is not more funding, it results in an inequity distribution. We are going to have to make hard choices as part of this process. We are going to have to start trusting each other more and we are going to have to stop protecting individual turf.

Every day that you go out to ride the bus, you trust the system that the service will be there. I encourage you to continue to talk to your transit system about the customer service you would like to see. They care what you think, even if they are not always able to do everything you would like. Your participation makes a difference. Thank you.

Russ Harman, Heart of Texas Council of Governments/Rural Transit District

My name is Russ Harman and I am the transportation manager for the HOTCOG/RTD. Thank you for the opportunity to present this information on behalf of our Rural Transit District, our subcontractors who are our day-to-day operators, and the clients who receive the benefit of our transportation system.

The opportunity to address this important question of state and federal funding is a very complex issue, one that has no easy or complete answers. There is one easy answer that says “keep the formulas as is because they are working.” This is fine for those areas that are receiving adequate funding. It is not an adequate answer for those agencies who feel they are under-funded. We fit into the later group and I hope my further comments are considered suggestions for improvement.

We believe the process should begin with a continuation of the present system, but TxDOT should immediately use the commission “set-aside money” to make additional allocations to under-funded agencies. This must happen with some clear methodology for determining who needs the additional funding. This process should not be a simple dividing of the money among all agencies. This is not the intent, but rather it should be help for under-funded agencies.

The second step should be to do an immediate inventory of the state transportation services provided by each agency and a determination made as to what services each agency is capable of providing if funding were available. This would be a determination of what transportation services would look like across the state and it may not be the same for each region or area.

This second step should include discussions with the operators who are most familiar with the needs, capabilities, and goals for increased transportation capability in their area. This process has to account not only for public transportation, but also for the changing needs of transportation clients as mandated by recent legislative action. The integration of human service transportation programs into the equation of funding is critical for the survival of those programs. The clients, who depend on our services for their needs, must be included in the planning process. They cannot be simply a product of the system, but must be part of the planning for transportation services. Included in these services are the clients who depend on the THD non-emergency medical transportation, the aging and disabled clients who simply need to go shopping, to the doctor, or to other activities to maintain their independence and dignity, and the workforce client who needs to search for jobs and must have a way to get to work once they have employment. Any review of funding formulas should be broad enough to include funding from all of these programs and additional grant programs, like the JARC funds, that could be made available to more agencies if they were not consumed by previous grant award winners.

Also, clear guidance in reporting should be developed if additional performance criteria are to be included in the funding formula. We must have uniform ways to report information that is meaningful to all agencies no matter where they are located in the state.

TxDOT has an opportunity to stop, step back, and survey transportation in Texas and improve on a system that, with reductions in overhead, brought about by combining all

transportation programs under one agency, can provide adequate funding across the state. We hope to be a part of that program and that our clients will be the beneficiaries of the advances in the transportation systems.

Thank you for the time to provide our input into the discussions.

Comment Forms Received

Ingrid Forward

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area

- Meeting needs of workforce, i.e., time and distance.
- Accessibility – needs of community.
- McLennan County-wide accessibility.
- Better scheduling.
- Properly trained and certified mechanics.

No Name Provided

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area

- Have longer operating hours until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m.
- Run on Sundays.
- Have buses run on time.
- Have longer routes.
- Go out of the city limits.
- Have the bus drivers do a uniform inspection to see if they are in order.
- Have buses run longer routes.

No Name Provided

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area

- Have buses run longer routes (9:00 or 10:00 p.m.).
- To run routes on Sundays after 12:00 Noon.
- To stay on schedule given time on/off (run every 30 minutes). Get transfer to cross/cross.
- Make longer routes to different areas. Go further on other streets.

- Go further on outer limit routes.
- Add more buses and drivers with shifts. Also add a few more shuttles.
- Above all, stress friendly courtesy service. Go that extra mile of friendliness, including drivers that are that are helpful and have a positive attitude to meet the needs of people riding the buses.

No Name Provided

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area

- Extend service later in the evening.
- A 7:30 p.m. minimum end of route is needed. Right now the official end of the route is 5:30 p.m. with a 6:00 p.m. shuttle.
- Buses are scheduled for replacement.

Bertha Jane Polston

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation You must consider how vital the public bus to any give area is. I know, in Waco, the bus is very vital to anybody who does not have their own transportation. Waco needs new buses! The buses they have now are not as totally safe as they should be. Buses should be safe not only for passengers but the bus operator as well. No one should get injured getting on or off a bus.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. The public transportation here is Waco Transit and it does provide good transportation. But, with more funding the bus system here could be great!

Lydia M. Mendoza

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I fall in the poor category and so do many other people riding the bus. That is what obligates us to speak out for help from the government. We look to the constitution of America for justice with help with funding for public transportation for the benefit of America, which does not deny its citizens the right to speak out peacefully.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. I am a disabled citizen and so are many others riding the transit buses. We urgently need more big buses to serve other routes that desperately need transportation to move around and get to work or whatever. We depend a lot on these buses we need all over the country. People are suffering and cannot drive, and you just have to adjust the funds to every community to keep the economy moving as it should be doing.

Linda Harris

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. The key factors in allocating funding for rural and small urban areas should be (1) number of people in need of

transit, (2) distance from rural and small urban areas to nearest town with hospitals, employment, grocery stores, etc., (3) average cost of vehicles, drivers, training, fuel, etc. to keep a transit program running smoothly, (4) size of the county, or size of rural and small urban area, (5) administrative cost to keep a transit service running smoothly and efficiently. **Additional money should be allocated to those counties for a transit start-up.**

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Fort Bend County does not have public transportation in the rural and small urban areas. We do have transit provided by several organizations for indigent, elderly, disabled and disadvantaged but on a limited basis. Some of the organizations and Fort Bend County have been provided with a small amount of 5310 funding for vehicles, but the need for transit and funding is much greater. According to the local Red Cross, Social Services Department, ARC, Texana, and Fort Bend Senior Citizens, Inc., they have stated that there is a large unmet need for transit services, particularly for dialysis and trips to the Medical Center. Not only is there a need for transit to medical facilities, the grocery store, bank, hairdresser, and courthouse rank high on the list. Also, there is a need for those who do not have a vehicle to drive to work. And there are those who cannot work because there is no means to get to work.

TYLER LISTENING SESSION

Tyler Chamber of Commerce, February 23, 2004

Attendees

Mark Sweeney, East Texas Council of Governments
Edwin Santos, ETCIL Physical Therapist
Debbie Aschemeier, William Booth Garden Apartments, Salvation Army
Claude Andrews, East Texas Council of Governments
John Mitchell, East Texas Center for Individual Living
James Pike, Rusk County Transportation Committee
Wanda Early, TxDOT Tyler District
Delaina Mayer-Pipes, TxDOT Tyler District
Tom King, Just Transportation Alliance
Nick Scarrini, SmCO Public Transportation District
Tim Brown, Just Transportation Alliance
Debbie Bernard, East Texas Center for Individual Living and GETTA
Mary Owen, TxDOT Tyler District
Randy Redmond, TxDOT Tyler District
Edward Esparza, Longview Transit
Debbie Jarrell, Rusk County Transportation Commission
Judy Stokes, Rusk County Transportation Commission
Dietrich Johnson, City of Longview Transit
Bobby McClenny, City of Lindale, Mayor
Jud DeMott, Access 2 Mobility
Audrey Kariel, East Texas Council of Governments
Louis Kariel
Lyle Nelson, Brazos Transit District
Bradley Ford, East Texas Center for Independent Living

Norman Schenck, Tyler Transit
Gary Williams, TxDOT Austin
Jimmie Cummings, Anderson County Community Council
Lynda Pugh, ARK-Tex Council of Governments
Sam Russell, Brazos Transit District
Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizen Fund
Beverly Logan, NETO
Tommy Graves, NETO
Bobbi Minter, NETO
Jeanne Davidson, NETPHD
Mike Murray, East Texas Council of Governments
Billie Holloway, East Texas Center for Independent Living
Roxanne McKinley, East Texas Council of Governments
Daniel Swanson, Texarkana Urban Transit
Kay Dorman, Minibus
Susan Bryant, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
John Overman, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Audrey Kariel, East Texas Council of Governments

When Bill Ratliff was Lieutenant Governor, he appointed me to a statewide Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC). He knew I had no background with public transportation except for passenger rail, but he did know that I had a strong interest in transportation during my years as Mayor of Marshall, and he knew that I had a strong interest in Marshall and the East Texas area's economic well-being. I took this appointment very seriously and began researching the subject. I attended every PTAC meeting held in Austin at that time.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered a little known – almost a secret – that the East Texas Council of Governments is the lowest funded rural public transportation operator in Texas, although we are the second largest in the state in population and density.

This program is a small one in the Texas Department of Transportation's divisions, only disbursing \$10.7 million a year in federal funding to 40 operators. Twenty-seven of them were over-funded, with 13 operators under-funded and my East Texas area was at the bottom of the barrel. The inequity I saw shocked me. The only way to correct this inequity was to change the formula. The Transportation Commission saw this inequity and was working with the committee to determine what needed to be done. It is an extremely complex issue. The formula changes were discussed at the PTAC meetings I attended, but frankly even with the proposed changes we discussed; it was going to take 15 years for proper funding to come to East Texas. The over-funded operators in the state have benefited from millions of dollars in federal funds through the years to develop their systems. Never have I seen a more unfair situation.

My appreciation goes to the Transportation Commission and staff who are working to solve this problem. Frankly, I empathize with their situation. No area wants to have cuts in their funding, and they are fighting to keep their systems in tact. My area is in the dark about this situation. Very few people are even aware of the situation. I hope we can figure out the best way to approach this problem and solve it to better serve all citizens.

There are some operators that serve only one county. The largest, most well-funded system serves about 24 counties, and the ETCOG serves 14 counties. How can you equitably fund these entities? I am not sure, but if your largest operator serves 24 counties, and the next largest operator, ETCOG, services 14 counties, then why would ETCOG be at the bottom of the funding barrel? The answer is the past formula that only benefited those operators in control of the system.

The PTAC on which I served was disbanded, and a new advisory committee formed. I declined to be considered for reappointment thinking that this is a tremendously complex issue, and that perhaps someone more informed than myself should represent my beloved East Texas.

My interest in this subject remains. I am now serving as chairman of the Greater Marshall Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. I find it easier to get to Kilgore than to get to Austin!

The East Texas Council of Governments recommends the following Rural Public Transportation Formula to the Transportation Commission:

- 50 Percent – Rural Population. Just as the federal government allocates the Federal Transit Funds.
- 35 Percent – Population Density. Cost per trip in less dense populated areas is higher. This factor benefits West and South Texas.
- 5 Percent – Economic Disadvantaged Population.
- 5 Percent – Elderly and Disabled Population.
- 5 Percent – Performance Measure. Cost per mile (cost per mile is the only fair performance measure).

The revised funding formula should be fully implemented over a five-year period giving all operators their equitable funding.

Another problem that the ETCOG sees is that until TxDOT uniforms the data gathering of other performance measures, each rural public transit operator comparisons will not be appropriate. The data should be able to be audited, but to do that we need some sort of uniform data collection which is not presently in place. This should be the responsibility of TxDOT in my opinion.

To the Transportation Commission and Mr. Behrens, we know you are looking for a fair funding mechanism and this is truly appreciated. I urge you to give special consideration to areas like ETCOG who have suffered under the present funding methods and who have lost the benefits of major funding to develop more service for our citizens.

Could you consider that if there is an increase in federal or state funding that those funds should first be used by the areas that have suffered and lost service because of this problem situation?

We applaud you for searching for ways to disburse federal funds in a more equitable manner. Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

Daniel Swanson, Texarkana Urban Transit District

My name is Daniel Swanson and I am General Manager of the Texarkana Urban Transit District. My position is a little different from others here in that I represent Texarkana, Arkansas in this. Both states are facing similar funding issues. Local match is a problem in both states.

The first thing I want to address is something I heard during the videoconference. I do not know if I heard correctly, but I thought there was mention of changing of the 50/50 split between rural and urban systems. I greatly oppose that change. While we would like to provide more service, current funding levels allow for a base level of service. We could not afford a drop in the existing funding level, however. I know many rural systems are under-funded, but so are many urban systems. I am not going to put myself in the under-funded category. My Board members would like me to. We could use more. We definitely could not see a decrease.

The way the formula was set up originally did not include any requirements to operating systems efficiently. All systems probably spend what the funding requirement from TxDOT, the federal government, and from their local sources allows. That does not mean that they spend it efficiently or that they operate their systems efficiently. I would like to see measures that take into operating efficiencies into account. I realize there are differences among systems, especially rural and urban.

I do not really have an answer. It is going to take some time focusing on operating more efficiently, however. Please do not reduce current funding levels.

Thank you.

Sam Russell, Brazos Transit District

Good evening. My name is Sam Russell. I am General Counsel for Brazos Transit District which is headquartered in Bryan and provides transit services for 16 counties and 94 communities.

With passage of HB 3588, HB 2292, and HB 3184, the Texas legislature has provided TxDOT with a golden opportunity to build and develop a premier, seamless, coordinated transit system using the 41 rural, 33 small urban, and eight metropolitan transit agencies. I understand that all but seven counties in Texas are included in a transit district. As usual, the whole country is watching to see what TxDOT and Texas does. The coordinating of all transit funds and public health and human services funds, into one agency is an innovative, and sweeping initiative that has been noticed and is of interest nationally. There is no reason why Texas cannot have a transit system that is second to none and a model for the rest of the country. Texas transit patrons and Texas taxpayers deserve nothing less.

TxDOT, of all agencies in this state, knows and understands the importance of planning. Our system of roads and highways bears out this fact. TxDOT does not put a map of Texas up on the wall and throw a dart to determine where a new highway will be built. It uses a systematic process of planning, designing, and constructing highways.

I believe the two most important ingredients in developing a premier transit system are planning and designing the program. These public meetings seem to me to be part of a planning process. The transit industry wants to help in this planning process. For the benefit of the taxpayers and transit users, and TxDOT's impeccable reputation, you should make sure this is done right the first time. I remember Commissioner Williamson stating at a meeting about a year go, "TxDOT doesn't want to operate buses." And, rightfully so.

During the past 25 years or so, the legislature and TxDOT have worked together to develop rural and small urban transit systems in response to needs throughout the state. And, because Texas has enjoyed, for the most part, unprecedented economic growth during that period of time, the funding provided by legislature and TxDOT allowed the rural and small urban programs to develop and grow.

With the passage of HB 3588 and HB 2292 during the 2003 session, the legislature directed TxDOT to also take control of the various health and human services transit programs and coordinate them into a fully integrated transit program. To accomplish this goal you must take stock, or inventory of the entities that are providing services and the services they are operating.

Essentially, I believe we are dealing with two funding programs. The first is funds appropriated strictly for rural and small urban transit programs. The second is funds that are attached to all of the health and human services programs that are being transferred to TxDOT. Since HB 3588 and HB 2292 mandated that health and human service program funds must be budgeted and accounted for separately and apart from the funds appropriated to public transit, the beginning point should be to determine who is providing only public transit services, who is providing only health and human services transit, and who is providing both. The suggestion was made at the Houston meeting that TxDOT contract with the Texas Transportation Institute to conduct such an inventory. This is an excellent idea. After all, how can you effectively and efficiently plan without knowing what you have? Purely and simply – you cannot. Let's do it right the first time!

I understand that in the area of health and human services transportation, there are some 14,000 contracts between the Texas Department of Health (THD) and individuals to provide medical transportation services. This does not include contracts between TDH and the transit agencies to provide Medicaid transportation. If that is indeed the case, not only is the system unmanageable, but it is a classic example of uncoordinated services. TxDOT should designate existing transit agencies within various areas of the state, who have the capability to provide dispatching service, to operate as a central dispatching facility where patrons can call to arrange the transportation services they need. This approach would provide a one-stop coordination at the local level. If the requested service requires crossing service area lines, the individuals involved can work out the details. We do not need some new type of brokered service. We already have that with the current system. Let's do it right the first time.

That being said, I understand the sense of urgency in this endeavor. HB 3184 directs TxDOT to develop a new funding mechanism to replace the decade-old funding formula by September 1, 2004. That is barely six months away. Not only are we still in the meeting stage of this process, but also no formula has even been developed and proposed so that systems will be able to determine and report to TxDOT the impacts on their operations. There are also

requirements of the rulemaking process – publishing proposed new rules, public hearings, comment period, and final adoption. A realistic time line to accomplish this task is probably 12 months. There is nothing in any of the bills that would prohibit TxDOT from adopting the current public transit formula for rural and small urban systems as an interim formula. There is no need to rush to judgment to change the public transit formula for the sake of change when it may be necessary to change the formulae again once you have determined how to integrate all of the health and human services funding into the equation. Let's do it right the first time.

The worst scenario of all would be to adopt a new funding formula without knowing the real impact on existing transit systems, especially if it causes a reduction in funds to existing services, causing disruption of local service and, the potential disposal of equipment, only to find out that the formula did not achieve the intended result. Both components of this funding process must be considered together when developing the ultimate funding mechanism for the new coordinated system. Let's do it right the first time.

It goes without saying that critics of the current formula will say that you are only perpetuating a broken system that benefits only a few. I recall one of the speakers at the videoconference holding up a chart to attempt to show that some systems, Brazos and CARTS in particular, were receiving an unfair portion of the funds based on the current formula. I know for a fact that both of those districts translate the dollars appropriated to them into innovative and effective services for their citizens – service that has been built up incrementally over the years of operations. For those systems that feel they are under-funded and can demonstrate a need for additional funding, we think that TxDOT should immediately take steps to assist those districts by increasing their funding through the 10 percent set-aside for commission selection projects. Let's do it right the first time.

Success depends on a collaborative approach. TxDOT should not overlook the wealth of experience and expertise that resides in the transit industry as the department works to develop appropriate service delivery models and methods for its added responsibilities. Brazos Transit and other transit districts look forward to offering assistance to TxDOT to plan, design, and build a premier, seamless, coordinated transit system in Texas that is second to none and a model for the rest of the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this evening and share our views on this important matter.

Lyle Nelson, Brazos Transit District

My name is Lyle Nelson of Brazos Transit District. I am in a unique situation this evening as I am representing the county judges and our Board of Directors, as well as the city mayors that we serve. As a result, my comments will be brief.

Our Board of Directors and local officials that we represent recommend the department adopt the following goals:

- Any formula should result in a general public system that serves everyone, regardless of whom is paying for their trips.

- The formula should increase funding to all systems by integrating the human service funding currently going to TxDOT through HB 3588 into the existing public transit network in Texas.
- No existing system should lose funding. Past formula proposals have been predicated on older systems losing funding to increase funding to newer systems. Why should entire sections of the state which had the foresight to develop and financially support public transit in the beginning be penalized just because we have been in business longer?
- A financial incentive bonus program should be established to reward systems like The District who successfully coordinate with other entities to pool resources to increase access to mobility across their region.

The commission currently allocates 10 percent of the federal and state appropriations at its own discretion. Those funds should be used to immediately increase funding to those districts which the commission currently considers to be under-funded.

House Bill 3184 requires the department to adopt a funding formula by September 1, 2004. That date appears to be driving the schedule in this formula process. There is nothing in HB 3588 or HB 3184 which prohibits the department from adopting the current formula as a temporary formula. This approach would give the department time to inventory and evaluate all the health and human services transportation funding which was transferred to the department in HB 3588 and to integrate that funding into a final funding formula. This approach would result in no funding cuts for systems and would provide a comprehensive, well planned, statewide transportation plan for all Texans. We urge the department to adopt this strategy.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Debbie Bernard, East Texas Center for Independent Living

My name is Debbie Bernard and I am the Associate Director of the East Texas Center for Independent Living. We are a resource center for individuals with disabilities in East Texas and transportation research, training, and advocacy has been a major part of our budget since our inception.

Many of our clients do not drive. Because of their disabilities they must rely on public transportation when and where it exists. I want to suggest to you that our primary public transportation in the rural and small urban areas should focus on transporting the disabled. These are not people who are sick. These are people who cannot drive for different reasons. The visually impaired cannot see to drive. The physically impaired cannot operate a vehicle. There are many physical and mental conditions that prevent driving. Seizure disorders and mental and emotional disabilities can affect the judgment necessary for safe driving. It is also well documented that many individuals with disabilities are also economically disadvantaged, which means they cannot afford a vehicle.

I am here to speak on their behalf. I would like to share a few stories. The first is Marcie. Marcie is diagnosed with schizophrenia that is controlled with medication. She just

recently relocated to Tyler because Tyler has a fixed route system. She has, for the first time in 35 years, been able to move into her very own apartment. She comes to our facilities for training by bus. Soon, hopefully, she will have her first job. She was able to visit her dog last week at the Veterinarian by bus. When she came in this morning she was excited because she had found a dentist that is on a bus route. The fact that it takes her 45 minutes to travel 12 blocks is okay with her because she does have the ability to use a system that exists. We are thankful for that.

Now let me tell you the story of James, who lives in Lindale, which is not too far from here and is part of the rural transit district. James is 57. He has Parkinson's disease and it is in the advanced stages. His wife has had to return to work to keep health insurance for the family. Recently he had become very despondent and his physician suggested that he attend a Parkinson's support group in Tyler. His wife called us to find out what transportation might be available.

I referred her to the rural transit provider. His wife called me back and said they could help with him with the trip. They would pick him up at 7:00 a.m. and return him at 5:00 p.m. The support group meets at 11:00 a.m. James does not have the stamina to wait around until 5:00 p.m. to return home. I called the rural provider and we discussed some other options. We were able to finally coordinate a trip with an individual who was going in for dialysis. James would be picked up around 9:00 a.m. and be returned home about four hours later. I offered to ride with him the first day because he was nervous. As we waited for the van to arrive we got a telephone call saying the van had broken down and all the trips were cancelled for that day. In talking with the provider later, they have an aging vehicle. They do not have funds to purchase the back-up vehicles that they need. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find James another ride with the rural transit system that would meet his needs.

There is no point in trying to explain to James historical funding formulas. The point is that all of East Texas does not get an equitable share of transportation dollars. I understand funding is tight, however, let me share with you some of things we are doing in East Texas to help James and other who need service.

I am now speaking on behalf of the East Texas Committee of the Greater East Texas Transportation Alliance (GETTA). This organization is composed of 19 voting members including the transportation providers, local, regional, and state transportation authorities; human services organizations, such as my employer ETCIL, and other consumers and civil leaders. The meetings are attended by individuals from those groups and 10 other social services organizations. Our collaborations began almost two years ago. The purpose of the alliance is to increase the efficiency of public transportation in the area through education, research, and regional planning. Marty Allen, the PDC here, has explained state and federal funding and has been a tremendous help in obtaining funding materials on coordinated transportation. Through some innovative funding, GETTA has had one year contract with TxDOT to conduct research. We have done our homework. There are three different initiatives underway. As an example, GETTA has identified 324 stakeholders, 154 providers, 256 vehicles, and 34,400 people, 61 percent of whom need transportation.

Through these survey instruments we have identified the location of people who need transportation. We have also identified where they want to travel, when they want to travel, and any assistance needed to be able to use public transportation. We define a truly transit dependant

person as an individual over the age of 16, with a disability, who has to rely on someone else for their transportation. Our most recent survey indicates that less than eight percent of these people know that there are rural transit providers.

If we restate that optimistically, we are able to serve eight percent of those individuals who need transportation to attend work, school, shopping, and other activities. That percentage is not because we do not know all the needs. Again, we have done our homework. It is because we have insufficient funding. I hope this information will demonstrate to TxDOT that the Tyler TxDOT District, as well as ETCOG Rural Transit District, in conjunction with GETTA and others, can put together the planning, information, and collaboration to coordinate and share resources.

Thank you.

James Pike, Rusk County Transportation Committee

My name is James Pike and I work for the Texas Department of Health. I am here this evening to represent the Rusk County Transportation Committee. Rusk County is a small rural county located adjacent to Smith County. Our population is approximately 47,000. Henderson is the county seat, and largest city with a population of some 11,000.

Two or three years ago, TDH conducted a survey in the county and held a meeting with the key stakeholders to discuss major issues and concerns in the county. Transportation was one of the major issues identified through this process. The Rusk County Transportation Committee was formed to help address some of the concerns identified in the survey and meeting. The Rusk County Transportation Committee has partnered with the Greater East Texas Transportation Alliance and the East Texas Center for Independent Living to conduct a study in Rusk County to develop a rural transportation system.

We started trying to identify the transportation needs of residents. I would like to highlight a few results from our most survey. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents in Rusk County stated that they had a disability, 32 percent stated that they were retired, and 93 percent stated that they did not know we had a public transportation operator in the county. Approximately 96 percent reported they rely on either a family member, a church, or some other group. Some 79 percent reported they had never used public transportation. I believe that is because they do not know the service exists. We do have public transportation in Rusk County. When we established the committee, no one on the committee knew there was public transportation in the county, including the County Judge. The Minibus has been doing a very good job under a Medicaid grant from TDH to take care of transporting Medicare patients. Due to the lack of funding, however, they could not extend their services to the general public. All of their vans and time was taken up serving Medicare clients.

The survey results identified a number of barriers to use of the system. These barriers included lack of knowledge of available service and little scheduling flexibility by rural providers. The providers could not schedule Medicaid transportation and rural transportation at the same time. There is also a perception that the service does not operate efficiently. Many times only one patient is transported at a time. People see the vans running up and down our highways with one person and say “what an inefficient way to operate.”

At our last meeting one of our attendees indicated that some families in our county will pay \$40 to \$80 in food stamps to a provider, not to Minibus, but to someone else, to take them to the clinic in Rusk County. If people have to go to a clinic or doctor in Dallas, the cost would be up to \$300. Transportation and a good organized rural transportation system are definitely needed in East Texas. I submit that Rusk County is not the only county in this condition.

Thank you.

Norman Schenck, City of Tyler Transit

My name is Norman Schenck. I work for the City of Tyler Transportation System. I want to thank TxDOT for bringing us into the 21st century by using modern technology on February 10, 2004. I think the idea of using the videoconference should be applauded. Not only did it allow us the opportunity to comment, it also allowed us to hear comments from across this great state of ours so that we had a better understanding of the transportation problems everywhere, instead of just our own communities. What is really wonderful is that it came out of a PTN meeting. TxDOT embraced the concept of the videoconference. Rather than saying it could not be done, TxDOT made it happen. I have been in other states where that kind of thing did not happen. Thank you very much.

The gentlemen from Texarkana talked about possibility of changing the current 50/50 rural/small urban funding split to a 65 rural/35 small urban funding split. If this change were adopted, it would mean the City of Tyler system would lose a little over \$93,000 under current funding levels. That money is used to match FTA dollars, and so the real loss to the system could be as high as \$465,000 or one-third of our current budget, assuming the state funds were used as capital match – only \$186,000 if used as 50/50 operating funds. Our current ridership is growing at up to 22 percent per year. This change would limit the growth of the system without a significant increase in local support. I would be opposed to any major change in the split between small urban and rural funding levels.

Basing our funding on historical spending levels does not allow for system growth. I agree that you cannot double your spending levels in one year, but with the current formula you are basically using a biblical principal of “to those that have, even more will be given.” This year Tyler was fortunate to have more money available in our FTA grant than in the past. In the first year of this program we only drew down about 50 percent of the increase, but this funding should be utilized for capital projects this year. Without receiving the FTA recommended allocation for our 5307 grant, we would have been in jeopardy of reducing service levels. Instead the city was able to increase its contribution, pull down additional FTA funds, and increase the level of service in Tyler. Please allow us to continue to grow and better serve our citizens. Do not use past funding history to set future allocations.

I do not see how we can rely on the health and human services dollars flowing through TxDOT to improve the public transit system. I know that public transit can improve service for health and human services customers and realize some savings that could be shared among providers. But possible savings will not be enough to solve the needed funding issues for areas such as ETCOG who are under-funded.

I do not envy the decision makers. We need equitable funding statewide. Which is easier, to take a ride away from a wheelchair customer going to visit his mother in a nursing home that has been using transit for several years, or not offering that same trip to the customer when they move from a better funded system to one that cannot afford to provide the trip? Neither is really what we want to see happen. Ideally there would be funding for both trips, whether they are in Lufkin or Henderson, Tyler or Canton, Waco or Longview.

The plan that was being proposed around in FY 2003 seemed well suited to get the most rural properties back to a level of funding that appeared equitable. It think the state would benefit if a formula could be developed so that all areas of the state received equitable funding in five years based on population density. A plan that would allow us to receive the amount posted in the federal register each year would be a great boost to Tyler, as it would enable us to grow both with improved infrastructure and better levels of service. The extra bus route we were able to fund between Thanksgiving and Christmas is one example of how we were able to improve service. This route allowed workers to use our system to get to work when normally at this time of year traffic is so bad it forced them to find alternate transportation. We hope add later evening service soon through a JARC grant. Having the FTA funding held at the levels placed in the federal register would allow us to continue that service after the JARC grant expires.

I feel privileged to live in a state where we are concerned about state funding formulas for transit. I moved to Texas in late 2002 from Alabama. There was no state funding provided for public transit. I appreciate the commitment of our state to the needs of its citizens.

Proposed federal funding will hopefully bring new dollars to Texas transit systems later this year. Both urban and rural transit systems stand to gain dollars with the reauthorization of TEA-21. While additional federal funds may not solve our funding challenges, it will certainly help.

It is important to note that we do not need just equitable funding; we need more funding for all systems in the state. We can do more with more dollars. Please consider increasing funding levels for public transit. Help the individuals who rely on public transit and those that chose to use public transit by providing us with more resources. When federal funding increases we need to be in a position to request more local funds. That will be a much harder sell to our local authorities if the state does not take a leadership role and increase state funding for public transportation.

Thank you.

Roxanne McKinley, East Texas Council of Governments

My name is Roxanne McKinley and I am with ETCOG. There have been many comments made this evening and during the videoconference related to why TxDOT should or should not change the rural funding formula. Based on a draft formula TxDOT released last year focusing on using a 75 percent population and 25 percent land area formula, there were 17 under-funded operators and 23 over-funded operators. This area is significantly under-funded.

The phrase “hold harmless” has been mentioned by some people. This term would protect those systems currently receiving more funds. We need to address the under-funded

areas, like ETCOG. Based on the propose formula, under-funded system range from \$667 to \$724,000. This area was the most under-funded.

Many parts of the 14 counties in our area do not receive transit service five days a week. We cannot get clients to cancer treatments, students to school, and patients to their medical appointments, including some dialysis patients, due to lack of transit services. One patient had to be put in a nursing home because they were unable to get service to and from dialysis three days a week.

We do not have funding to meet the basic needs of people in this area, let alone consider service for other types of trips. We cannot get people to their doctors' appointments, to school, and to the grocery store. All of Texas deserves the same rural public transportation service regardless of where they live. ETCOG is significantly under-funded. Drastic action is needed to equitably distribute available funds for transit.

Thank you.

Tom King, Just Transportation Alliance

I would like to thank Brazos Transit for sending two people to this meeting. I can understand their position of not wanting to lose funding. Nobody wants to reduce service to people currently receiving transit service.

Unless funding levels are increased, maintaining the current formula means that under-funded areas like ours will continue to be under-funded in the future. While we do not want to hurt other systems, we do want equitable funding for our area. Unless there is a magic funding fairy, some hard decisions may need to be made.

The current situation is unfortunate. Maybe we have been too polite and too conservative in this area. We were not troublesome people and we did not get to the funding trough. So we got shorted and because our funding formula is based on history and not population we are stuck there. If we do not change it we will stay stuck there for a long time. Giving us a little bit out of the 10 percent set-aside is not enough. I do not think we should lock the funding split between rural and small urban. I think that needs to be flexible figure. I think that would encourage efficiency. Transportation is not tied to geographical zones it is tied to where people live. If you lock in a 50/50 split it makes it difficult to encourage a small urban system to roll its buses across the border into the rural area where they could do so. It discourages innovation and we need to be innovative. We need to encourage where this is a small urban and a chronic lack of rural, we need to encourage those small urban systems to go out and get their customers that live in those communities.

TxDOT needs to find an agreeable way to encourage coordination. We need a plan that rewards transit providers and local communities to get together and work together to come up with a way to coordinate. It has been suggested that we give that job to some large transit provider. The only problem with that is that transit providers are like any business. They are about what they are about. Transit providers are about moving buses. Public transit needs to be about moving people and a way to do that is to create a coordination resource that starts with the

person and brokers the rides. It gives an incentive for a transit provider to come up with creative ways to meet the needs instead of creating way to keep the buses going.

I highly recommend that we look hard at rural mobility management as a possible solution, or a possible standard. We need some sort of standard so that we all are going in the same direction with regional coordination. Right now we are fragmented out in the rural areas and there is nothing in the formula that encourages us to be anything other than fragmented. In our own region our rural and small urban areas do not connect up in any kind of formal way. They were grown separately on either side of the split.

The formula needs to be a work in progress and it needs to move from history-based funding to population based. That is how the feds split the money up to Texas. We shuffle the deck and deal out in a whole different way. It is going to be hard work and require planning so as not to hurt those guys who were good at getting to the trough back when, but it also should not hurt the vast numbers of people out there who didn't have anybody to go to the trough for them.

The fact that we didn't get there way back when is not something to base a funding formula on. I know it is hard; there is no other way around it. It is going to be hard work and some people are going to have to work hard to make up the gaps, but we have got to encourage the rurals to come up to speed. We cannot punish regions because they are not organized. They are too small to be organized, they are too busy. Our guys are too busy running 59 buses around a 14-county area to spend a whole lot of time in Austin.

Thank you.

Nick Scarrini, Northeast Texas Public Health District

My name is Nick Scarrini. I am the Director of the Northeast Texas Public Health District. I want to make a couple of comments from the public health perspective and from the user's perspective. The Northeast Texas Public Health District has the largest elderly population of all of the public health regions in the state.

Many people who live in rural areas require transportation. Ten percent of patients coming to the Smith County Public Health District Clinics come from outside of Smith County. Patients come from 20 different counties. We know there are people who are not able to get to clinics due to lack of transportation.

We have a mobile unit that serves seven counties as one way of trying to reach these individuals. The mobile units find patients who have not had health care service in 25 years. These include women who have not had women's exams, mammograms, or anything for 25 years. I do not think that is right. People should have transportation to get to health care needs. We need more funding for transportation in this area to address these needs.

Within the City of Tyler, we have bus service and other programs providing transportation. But we have another problem related to where people live and how they get to places they need to go. One of our clinics is located on Gentry Parkway. Women push babies in strollers across six lanes of traffic to get to the clinic. That is a different transportation problem that even a good bus system probably will not address. There are other problems. The problem with access to health care might be awareness. One-third of our missed appointments or no-

shows are due to transportation. So, we have to double book clinics to make sure that we at least get a full clinic because people cannot always make it to their scheduled appointments.

Providers also have difficulty serving trips because the doctor's office, the lab facility, and the pharmacy are all located in different parts of town. Even if a person can get to primary care provider it is difficult to get them to the follow-up services.

Just to summarize the major issues in the health care area for this area, primarily Smith County, but really all of Northeast Texas, is access to primary care, access to specialty care, access to chronic disease medicines, access to mental health services, and access to dental care. Work trips are also important.

Thank you.

Mark Sweeney, East Texas Council of Governments

First of all I would like to thank you for the opportunity speak with you today and I wanted give, as a matter of record, a copy of a resolution that was approved almost year ago. I am going to read this resolution on behalf of ETCOG and specifically the ETCOG Executive Committee. The resolution reads:

Whereas, the East Texas Council of Governments has been designated the East Texas Rural Transit District and has been providing Rural Public Transportation since 1990; and

Whereas, the Texas Department of Transportation is drafting a proposed Rural Federal Allocation Formula; and

Whereas, based on population and population density, ETCOG has been under-funded;

Whereas, in the first year of the draft Rural Federal Allocation, ETCOG will be at 24 percent of their funding level; and

Whereas, after five years ETCOG will be at 50 percent of their funding level; and all other Rural Public Transportation Operators will be at least 100 percent of their funding level;

Whereas, it will take 15 years, using the proposed draft allocation, for ETCOG to be at their 100 percent funding level.

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Executive Committee of the East Texas Council of Governments recommends that the Texas Department of Transportation give ETCOG special recognition in developing a Rural Federal Funding allocation to enable ETCOG to be at their 100 percent funding level in 5 years, like all other Rural Transit Operators.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 13th day of March, 2003.

This resolution provides an indicator of how long we have been talking about our concerns. I cannot stress enough to you that ETCOG is truly the poster child of the under-funded transit service in all Texas. It is an issue that you have heard tonight from several speakers and I suppose more in the next few minutes. It is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Also, something that was brought up in the past and has been mentioned in both the videoconference a few weeks ago and tonight, is that the health and human services transportation funding will serve as something of a funding panacea that will equalize everybody in the state. I think that is a misconception. If you are aware of the requirements of that particular program funding there are a lot of restrictions, regulations, and strings that are attached to that type of funding. I think it is a tremendous understatement to somehow believe that it will somehow bring everybody to some level of equity in terms of a funding formula.

I would also like to bring to your attention, as was mentioned earlier by Roxanne McKinley and Mike Murray, we work on a daily basis with the issues of transportation. Our stock vehicles and equipment are aging. We put a good deal of mileage on our buses on a daily basis to serve our area. You cannot operate a functional and realistic service when you have that kind of an aged stock of buses.

I would like to end with the Commissioner's comment on the video that it is time to belly up the bar. I believe it is time for providers in Webb and Brazos Counties to belly up the bar and share the wealth and the funding. We believe that waiting an additional 12 months to analyze and reanalyze the issue is a waste of time. We need the funding now, we need it today, and we would like to see it happen.

Thank you.

Claude Andrews, Area Agency on Aging, East Texas Council of Governments

Good afternoon. My name is Claude Andrews. I am the Director of the Area Agency on Aging for ETCOG. I have held this position for some 30 years. During that time we have tried to develop a comprehensive delivery system of transportation for the elderly in this area.

Over the past 30 years we have had up to 30 service contractors. Today we have three service providers. So I understand what the state is going through when it talks about restructuring the allocation of money. In the 1980s I had full afro haircut. I think you can see what is happened since that time. Some of my hair loss has to do with the simple fact that we have had some frustration trying to figure out how to get the elderly and disabled clients from the rural areas of East Texas to the urbanized areas where medical facilities and other essential facilities exist.

Many of our elderly and disabled clients do not access available service simply because of the complicated routes and regulations. At one time we administered what was called Tower 19. One difficulty with this program was tracking the many funding sources they had to account to, and adequately addressing bookkeeping and financial responsibilities.

Our service area consists of 10,000 or so square miles, with a population of 700,000. Twenty-five percent of that population are elderly, that is 65 years of age or older. Twenty-five to 26 percent of that population is below the poverty level. Therefore, many of the clients we serve cannot afford public transportation if it requires a fee. I think you know that no human service agency can provide adequate funding for their recipients to transport them to the services they need.

In conclusion, it has become apparent that there will never be enough federal and state monies to adequately fund transportation for the elderly and disabled, not to mention the general public. Therefore, I request as you develop your funding formula that you make it flexible and that you make so that individuals in the rural areas are not penalized and pitted against each other to fight and scrap for the dollars available.

Thank you very much.

John Mitchell, East Texas Center for Independent Living

I do not have a prepared statement because I actually did not plan to speak this evening. TxDOT can do more for East Texas. It appears in looking at actual service I would like to compliment those groups that provide services, including rural, transit providers, volunteers, and various organizations.

From what I understand the funding for East Texas is not on par with other parts of Texas. We feel we are entitled to equivalent or equal service for handicap people as other parts of the state are receiving.

Jud DeMott, Access 2 Mobility

I may be one of the only people here this evening from the private sector. I would just like to say that my company addresses mobility needs. My customers are people who need mobility devices to get around, such as scooters, power scooters, equipment in their homes to help them get around, and vehicle lifts and other driving implements. I have been in business in this area for three years. Some of my competitors, especially the national competitors who advertise people taking their power chair to the Grand Canyon or taking it on a cruise ship, uses these very emotional approaches to sell their power chairs through Medicare. These people get their power chair and find out that they are stuck at home because they have no transportation available. I get call after call from disappointed people that I have to turn away because I am in this business for profit.

My customers are the lucky ones. The lucky ones who can afford to pay, who are covered through the Veterans Administration, the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, community-based alternative programs for which there is a long waiting list, or Community Living and Assistance and Support Services (CLASS), and a half dozen other programs.

Many people have mentioned the difficulty of getting transportation for people to get to their doctor appointments and other key needs. I had a lady call me one time and kept telling me that she had to have this lift because she needed to get to her cancer treatments. She was pleading for service. I called up the agency that handled her funding and I took a personal interest in her and she and I got the wheels turning and got some funding. She assured me that it was a desperate matter that she go have her cancer treatments. We finally got the trip scheduled on a Friday. I called her on Monday to let her know the trip was set for the end of the week and found out she had passed away.

So the question is should it be the lucky ones who get transportation or should there be some other way to determine who gets transportation funding.

Thank you.

Debbie Aschemeier, Salvation Army's William Booth Garden Apartments

My name is Debbie Aschemeier. I am a Service Coordinator at the William Booth Garden Apartments, which is a housing complex for low-income elderly and disabled individuals. We are part of the Salvation Army. We operate a small transportation system for residents at the housing complex. We can get them to doctor's appointments, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the grocery store on Mondays and Fridays, and that is pretty much it.

Our budget is really tight. If you know anything about the Salvation Army, they run a very tight ship. It has got to be a lean operation because they are trying to help the homeless, help them get acclimated into society to where they are working, to where they have to place to live, and they have to have transportation to get to work. But the money has to be used judiciously.

Without our transportation system, if a person has something that comes up on the weekend, a holiday, or after hours, if their doctors' appointment is at 3:00 p.m. and they are not done by 4:30 p.m. we cannot get them home because our service stops. I cannot tell you how many days notice it takes to get a seat on a paratransit bus. I have lived in all areas of the state and I have seen all different types of transportation systems. The elderly, disabled, and other people have difficulty getting needed transportation in all areas. I would have expected a city like Tyler to operate service later in the day. I would like to see service further out in the rural areas. I understand where many speakers are coming from – we need more funding and more service.

Thank you.

Tom King – Follow-Up Comment

One thing I would like to see TxDOT do is put some real thought into in this process. This is going to require a great deal of expertise and community development, including some leadership in designing a system that encourages us to do what we need to do to coordinate so that those buses aren't running with one person in them. To do that, TxDOT has tremendous abilities as contract managers. However, it's not just an engineering problem. It is a problem that requires being able to pull together a community and teach them how to do, how to do what they need to do to serve the people they need to serve.

TxDOT has a priceless opportunity to provide leadership there. TxDOT has an opportunity to show us the way. As we prepare funding formulas let's not just do the math or come up with elaborate systems. Let's keep it flexible. Let's use the power that TxDOT has in its hands.

I was one of the folks that went to Austin to fight for that so that you would have that power. Use it wisely, use it to show the little guys that are out there, that have the problem, that do not know they have the problem, rural counties out there where 90 percent do not know anything even exists nor how to organize their community that they can get it. We do not have anybody else to use. These guys have planners and lobbyists that they send to Austin. We do

not have that. We just have real people trying to figure out how to do a job that is absolutely overwhelming.

SAN ANGELO LISTENING SESSION

TxDOT District Training Room, February 24, 2004

Attendees

Lynn Castle, TxDOT Lubbock District
Jeffery Sutton, Concho Valley Council of Governments and Rural Transit District
Mike Brown, Tom Green County
Allen Amos, Concho County
George Knapp, Coke County
Randy Young, McCullough County
Ja Guarjardo, Central Texas Rural Transit District
J.R. Salazar, Central Texas Rural Transit District
John Nanny, Irion County Council of Governments
Robert Brown, Sterling County
Less Standard, Irion County
Larry Isom, Reagan County
Roy Blair, Coke County
Susan Stockett, AMA District
Johnny Griffin, Concho Valley Workforce
Fred Mustain, West Texas Opportunities Incorporated Permian Basin Rural Transit District
Robert Stephens, Concho Valley Rural Transit District
Laura Jackson, Texas Workforce Center
Pat Blount, Texas Workforce Center
Bobby Killebrew, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Don Henderson, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Tina Collier, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Mike Brown, Tom Green County

I am representing the Concho Valley Council of Governments and the Concho Valley Rural Transit District. We applaud TxDOT in their efforts to facilitate a series of public meetings on the funding formula. There are seven county judges here this evening and several county commissioners. We deal with rendering equitable solutions on a regular basis. We know how hard it is to find equitable solutions to issues like the funding formula.

I would like to read a section of HB 3184. “The Commission shall adopt rules establishing a formula allocating funds among individual eligible public transportation providers. The formula may take into account a transportation provider’s performance, the number of riders, the number of residents in the service area for public transportation, population, population density, land area, and other factors established by the commission.”

We encourage TxDOT’s Public Transportation Division to work towards a new funding formula for rural transportation providers. We support a simple approach that is directed at regional needs in a predictable, equitable, and understandable manner. We would also hope that

in developing this formula, we remain true to the intent of the original federal enabling legislation to improve the mobility, and thus, the lives of the economically disadvantaged, the elderly, and the disabled in rural areas, and to the language in HB 1354.

We encourage the department to establish viable rural mobility goals and standards that are reflected in a formula that establishes unbiased census criteria for allocating subsidies for rural transit. The Concho Valley region supports a formula that considers the socio-economic composition of the beneficiaries of rural transit services and makes an effort to focus state assistance on the less densely populated, transit dependant, and isolated areas of the state. The formula presented in April 2003 included 45 percent to be based on population, 10 percent on the number of elderly, 10 percent on the number of disabled, 10 percent on the number of economically disadvantaged, and 25 percent on land mass. We feel this approach meets both the federal and state legislation and is equitable to all areas of the state.

The April 2003 TxDOT proposal also would have established a separate fund, equal to 10 percent of the total apportionment, to be set aside and distributed based on performance criteria. An appropriate and temporary application of the set-aside could be established for immediate relieve to those systems facing drastic reductions in funding due to any new formula distribution. Eventually, this set-aside could be used for the original intent of providing incentives to improve performance.

We support the application of performance measures, as proposed. Performance measures should encourage improved management and cost effectiveness. Concerns exist, however, with the use of performance measures. Performance measures must be based on universal and verifiable criteria.

For example, one measurement might be local contributions per capita. Local contributions should be taxes or other local funding. Local contributions should not include contract income such as Medicare and other federal and state programs. Local contributions should be limited to direct support from local government entities, counties, and special districts. In Concho Valley we use local taxes.

Another performance measure could be trips per capita. While trips per capita is an excellent performance measure, the definition of a trip needs to be established, along with a certified process to ensure that all systems are using the same approach and that all are being graded using the same data.

Operating expenses provides a good measure to gauge the cost of doing business in a region. Operating expenses are probably the most easily verifiable of all performance measures, as long as mileage and trip information is verified and recorded appropriately, and all rural transit providers include the same line items in operating expenses.

Performance goals are great as long as everyone is working with the same guidelines, reporting in a common format, and using information that can be verified as proper and accurate. Care must be taken to ensure that the cost to enforce and audit proper performance does not become so expensive to severely impact available funding levels.

Some of the comments during the videoconference concerned the division of funds between rural and small urban operators. It is our understanding, however, that this split, currently set at 65 percent for rural and 35 percent for small urban, is not a function of the funding formula. It is a decision made by the legislature in the appropriations bill for each biennium.

TxDOT currently sets aside 10 percent of the funding for commission selected projects. We understand and support the need for the special projects set-aside. This 10 percent of the total funding is the safety net that gives the system the flexibility to meet unforeseen needs and gives operators the funds needed for special projects and expansions. An example would be the one time expense of building bus stops, improving maintenance facilities, operating terminal complexes, or paying for training, research, and planning. There are many needs that occur outside of the normal operations. This fund allows those needs to be addressed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak.

J.R. Salazar, Central Texas Rural Transit District

Good evening. My name is J.R. Salazar and I represent Central Texas Rural Transit District. We provide public transportation and medical transportation in a 10 county area.

The rural transit districts are under-funded. To help with the current situation, TxDOT should release the 10 percent set-aside for the commission selected projects to those districts demonstrating the need for additional funding.

The services of the Texas Transportation Institute should be engaged to scientifically inventory the level of service provided by each transit district. This information would be used to develop a plan and a formula to address all parts of the state.

An inventory of the amounts and categories of human service transportation funding surface needs should also be commissioned from TTI so that informed decisions can be made by TxDOT in assuming this new responsibility. Human services transportation funding administered by TxDOT should be used to give all transit districts the ability to serve all citizens with one community transportation system. This should be done through interlocal agreements with the appropriate accountability built into the system to satisfy state and federal requirements with respect to human service funds and other assurances necessary to assure clients access to the system. There should be one transportation system for Texans.

I differ a little bit from some of my colleagues in transportation. I would recommend that those medical transportation contracts be extended for one year to get everything in line, to figure out where we are going to go, and to try get everything in line. I would also like to make the point that some of the regional directors may be involved. They know the amount of services being provided in any of the counties in their area. Who knows better than they what is going on in those counties? So I would recommend that may be they would be involved with some of this as well.

The only other think I have is there has been some talk among my colleagues about holding some of the systems that were over-funded harmless as opposed to taking money away from them. Please keep in mind that while I do not propose that we hurt anyone, it is time that

we were all funded equally. Meaning those of us who have been historically under-funded have been hurt for many, many years and it is only fair for us to get our piece of the pie.

Thank you.

Fred Mustain, West Texas Opportunities Incorporated Permian Basin Rural Transit District

Hello, I my name is Fred Mustain and I am with West Texas Opportunities Incorporated Permian Basin Rural Transit District. We provide rural transportation in a 17 county area in the Permian Basin.

All rural transit districts are faced with rising costs for vehicles, new equipment, fuel, training, safety programs, and salaries for staff, who are asked to do more and more. Our funding levels have not increased to meet these needs. In the last eight years we have added five counties to our service area. Our funding formula is still based on original counties, however. We see the need for a new formula that is more equitable than the current situation.

The Section 5311 funds are distributed based on the population of the rural county area, square miles of rural county or rural portion of the county served. The areas not being served in a rural transit district should be deducted from that agency's formula. We have agencies that refuse to do service certain areas in a county. These agencies should not get credit for the entire county, which they are not serving.

Section 5311 allocations should not be based on a rural area's demographics, such as elderly, disabled, unemployed, and other factors. These groups are covered by funding from other programs such as Section 5310, the Agency on Aging, and welfare-to-work. Federal funding under this program prohibits serving the elderly, disabled, and low-income populations so the formula should not be based on those demographics.

A standard for one-way trips needs to be established. Currently, no standard exists on how agencies report trips. We all use different measures.

The other 10 percent should be on performance after the intercity and TxDOT expenses are conducted. That should be based on ratio of population served. The ability to sustain or increase services from year to year, the amount of match and/or local buy-in to a program beyond a standard 20 percent match.

The amount of coordinated conducted with other agencies and purchase-to-service agreements.....since many of those active are 5311 and other resources??? It should be established as part of a rural or regional transit district. Operational hours of days that the transit agencies service the rural population. If you are going six days a week you should get more money than a transit agency that only goes two a week. Establish strong ?????? for a funding year. The alternative objectives and also objectives of TxDOT, those that are reviewed by TxDOT, we should be held accountable for achieving those goals. This should be based on a previous average of the figures and recalculated every year. It should also be based on safety and maintenance records, such as major accidents per mile or ??? and vehicle down time.

Money should be budgeted for five counties and other rural areas that do not currently have a 5311 program. I'm talking about the five counties to the west of the Permian Basin and

the east of El Paso. At the end of each program year or in a sufficient time to enable other agencies to use operations or other transit-related purposes, this funding would back into the performance formula and issued out to other transit agencies. So if no one establishes a transit agency out there then the money set-aside for them should go back into the performance budget. At least the money is there in case somebody wants to get started.

New starts for 5307 should use available local and city and start-up funds before being added into the formula. Agencies that are not able to provide the minimum basic transit services on a continuous basis need a format that at least a cost-over run should have their budgets locked down and be given a period of time to turn things around. Those not able to do so should not be given additional funds to bail them out. But TxDOT or the local authority over that agency should seek another agency from running the program. Instead of taking the money away from them, let's give the money to somebody who can make that system work for that area.

Randy Young, McCullough County

I am Randy Young County Judge for McCullough County. I did not plan on speaking this evening, but I would like to address some things I heard during the videoconference.

The legislature has given the commission a directive to develop a funding formula. The legislation included some measures that could be included in the formula. So, there appears to be some direction in the legislative intent. The legislation provides a September 1, 2004 deadline for the new formula to be in place.

I have heard suggestions that more studies are needed before a new formula is established. As a county judge I too see issues studied too much rather as a way to delay needed action. It appears to me to be a waste of resources for a study in this case. We do not have time to do a study before the September 1 deadline. The only alternative I can see is to continue under the existing formula. We would still have to go through the same processes to implement the current formula as we would a new formula to buy enough time to do a study so that we could develop a new formula. My comment is would that we not study these issues to death. The legislature has provided direction on what should be considered in a new formula. These measures include the number of riders, the number of residents in the service area for public transportation, the population, the population density, and the land area.

The legislation includes the language, "other factors established by the commission" because they knew there were going to be other measures that might factor into the formula. I do not think the legislative intent was a carte blanche check to look at too many other factors, however. I would urge the commission to look at that statute. Like the old saying, "it says what it means and it means what it says," the state provides direction to the commission. The legislature has given a clear directive on what they would like done and a deadline to do it in. I would suggest allocating limited resources to providing service, rather than conducting more studies.

Thank you.

Comment Forms Received

Randy Young, County Judge, McCullough County. In order to provide a fair distribution for both rural and more urban areas, I believe that funding should be based on population, elderly population, disabled population, economically disadvantaged, and land mass. While a formula based on these factors would detrimentally affect my system, I believe that it would be fair to all systems.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. We have lots of areas and it is difficult to serve at the same per capita rate as the urban areas. The service, however, is probably even more important to my rural constituents. They have no alternatives.

FORT WORTH LISTENING SESSION

Intermodal Transportation Center, February 25, 2004

Attendees

Ven Hammonds, Texoma Area Paratransit Service
Shelley Terry, Cletran, City of Cleburne
Maggie Franklin, Parker County Transportation
Ron Parnell, City of Cleburne
Omega Hawkin, Kaufman Area Rural Transit
Renee Nugent, Kaufman Area Rural Transit
Vance Farris, Johnson County
Peggy Crist, Federal Transit Administration
Paul Hughes, REACH of Dallas
Michelle Dolley
Gayle Bruns, Lighthouse for the Blind
Angie Johnson, Catholic Charities
Christine Haley, World Relief
Shan Harbaugh, World Relief
Lylette Pharr, Catholic Charities
Sherry Crow, University of Texas, Arlington
Donna Halstead, Public Transportation Advisory Committee
Summer Stringer, Catholic Charities
Mary Lockridge, University of Texas, Arlington
Phil Walgand, Metro Equipment
Donna Murray, Federal Transit Administration
Tim Brown, Just Transportation Alliance
Faye Beaulieu, United Way Northeast
Linda Hannah, League of Women Voters
Jonnie Campbell, REACH
Dan Gadbury, Mental Health Mental Retardation TC
Michelle Bloomer, North Central Texas Council of Governments
Rita Goodner, North Texas SNAP, Inc.
Marcie Etie, Congresswoman Kay Granger's Office
Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizens Fund

Charles Sulls, TxDOT Fort Worth District
Donna Fowler, TxDOT Fort Worth District
Bobby Killebrew, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
Don Henderson, TxDOT, Public Transportation Division
John Overman, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Ven Hammonds, Texoma Area Paratransit Service (TAPS)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am Ven Hammonds, with the Texoma Area Paratransit Service (TAPS). Transit agencies are committed to continued input from consumers regarding our services. After all, that's what we are in business to do, serve the public. Our success depends on customer satisfaction. If there are suggestions on how to improve that process, we are always open to ideas. Consumers and their advocates should be most concerned about the lack of funding to effectively market and provide the needed transportation services throughout the state.

There are transit districts that are under-funded. We think TxDOT should immediately take steps to assist those districts by releasing the 10 percent set-aside for commission-selected projects to those districts that demonstrate the need for additional funding.

The transit providers are very concerned about the funding formula and the process TxDOT is using because we want to be sure that we continue to meet the needs of our customers and that there are no interruptions in service. The process should not be rushed. The Texas Transit Association (TTA) has developed a position paper on the funding formula that I would like to read. In addition to the previous two points, the position paper includes the following elements.

TxDOT should engage the services of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to scientifically inventory the level of service provided by each transit district so that quantitative decisions can be made for the funding needs of each district and for the state as a whole, and a plan can be developed to meet those needs.

An inventory of the amounts and categories of human service transportation funding and service needs should also be commissioned from TTI so that informed decisions can be made by TxDOT in assuming these new responsibilities. Before changing the current allocation formula, TxDOT should first identify the goals or objectives for general public, elderly, disabled, and special needs transportation for the state.

Before formulas are developed to distribute available funds and other resources, the funds and other resources need to be identified. How best to allocate those resources to achieve identified goals and objectives should be the primary criteria for development of any formula change. We need to know where we want to end up or what purpose we seek to achieve before a formula can be developed.

TxDOT should ensure there is no interruption or disruption in funding for transit districts by adopting the formula allocation procedures that were in place prior to their repeal in the last session as an interim distribution mechanism to meet the September 1, 2004 legislative mandate.

This mechanism should remain in place until the results of the service inventory and studies cited previously are completed, the results analyzed, a plan adopted pursuant to the findings, and the goals and objectives established for the state.

Human service transportation funding being transferred to TxDOT should be used to build all transit districts' ability to serve all citizens with one community transportation system. This should be done through interlocal agreements with the appropriate accountability built into the system to satisfy state and federal requirements with respect to the human service funds and those assurances necessary to ensure client access to the system. Public transit systems should serve all Texans.

Transit districts in Texas have been nationally recognized for their advances in transit services. Texas transit districts have been pioneers in the country in many areas of community transportation and coordinated transportation. TxDOT should call on the transit industry for peer assistance, consultants, and expert advice to advance a service model that can help those districts that need assistance in the integration of human service and public transportation. To date, all decisions and deliberations have been made without any meaningful industry collaboration. The view that we have a vested interest in funding decisions so we should not be consulted begs the question of how we can end up with any improved service delivery across the state.

I would end with a rhetorical question. Would TxDOT ever consider designing a new Interstate system without consulting at every stage with civil, structural, environmental, and other types of engineers?

Maggie Franklin, Parker County Transportation

I am Maggie Franklin with Parker County Transportation. If the funding formula is going to be redone, I think performance measures should be major factors. Possible measures include the number of people carried and the number of trips provided. Performance measures would be better than factors such as population and population density. It is better to look at the percentage of the population being served. Fund counties that are being served by transit. I do not know what the situation is across state, but I have heard funding is being provided for counties that are not actually served because they say there is no request for service in those counties.

Many of us were in the catch-22 situation from the last funding change. I think funding should be based on what is fair for the kind of job they do and the number of people being served.

Thank you.

Ron Parnell, City of Cleburne

My name is Ron Parnell and I am with the City of Cleburne. I think it would be of benefit if there was more uniformity in the way systems calculate funds, report the expenditure of funds, and prepare budgets. We all have our own agendas to some extent and we all do things a little differently. As we grow and expand to provide transportation all over the state we need to get on the same page. Using the same operating procedures, guidelines, and other elements

would be of benefit to all groups. I think TxDOT is going to look at this issue and I think this will help address some of the funding issues that we are dealing with.

That is the only comment I have. The actual formula itself is a tough process. We all want to see growth in funding not a reduction. We all want to do more to meet the needs of our residents. It continues to be expensive to operate transit service in Texas. We all should try to participate and coordinate more among the cities and counties in this area. All of these issues will eventually lead to the formula.

I want to make another comment about Medicaid transportation, which is a big issue. I see this as a system that is terribly broken. Medicaid is a service that has to be bid on and the low bidder, nine times out of ten, has to come back and subcontract with agencies that are already providing transportation. It does not make sense to me that it is at a higher cost. I can see where Medicaid transportation, if it is coordinated and works with agencies that are already providing transportation services, can work well. Medicaid would have a lower cost and it would help the agencies receiving those funds to increase their transportation. I really wish the state would look at ways to coordinate with Medicaid to get those services back to agencies that are providing transportation now and not agencies that are in private business and cannot provide the service that people need.

Michelle Dooley

I would like to suggest that while TxDOT is restructuring the formula, the department also examine practices at the different transit systems that are improving efficiency and using funding the way they are suppose to be. TxDOT should fund systems that are doing a good job. I know transportation is a huge issue and providing transit service is a big job. Many people in the area are on fixed incomes and live off on less than \$500 a month. If they have to pay \$5 for a round trip to go somewhere, it greatly limits their ability to travel. Please look real hard and see who is doing a good job and who is not. Thank you.

Gayle Bruns, Lighthouse for the Blind

I am Gayle Bruns and I work for the Lighthouse for the Blind in Fort Worth. I deal primarily with the elderly. My concern with funding is that TxDOT should look at those system operating efficiently and increase their funding. Systems that are not operating so well should be reviewed before they receive more funding. I would like funding to allow the medical emergency type transportation to be separated from non-emergency trips, like shopping. This approach would help situations where 65-, 75-, 85-year-old people have planned to go somewhere for a week or so and are bumped off the list because of a medical emergency.

I would like to suggest that TxDOT examine the funding available to the outlying counties. Most of my clients live in the counties surrounding Fort Worth. Someone coming to Fort Worth from Weatherford to get medical treatment at a facility and returning home typically has to transfer between different vehicles. Some of my clients are diabetic. I have one client that goes on the provided transportation to see an eye doctor. She is there for four or five hours with nothing to eat or drink unless she brings her own lunch and then she may or may not be picked up to be taken home or she may be put in a position to pay for taxi service to get her home. One

of my major concerns is that the elderly clients may be stranded or are required to wait for hours for the transportation they need.

Phil Waigand, Metro Empowerment

My name is Phil Waigand and I am from Arlington. I deal with the Metroplex collaboration called Metro Empowerment. I am here to encourage collaboration between Dallas and Fort Worth at all levels, especially transportation.

I would like to note positive things that have happened recently. We are going to have our third round trip on the Trinity Rail Express (TRE) on March 27th. We are going to have an event in Dallas called the *March for Respect* and we are encouraging everyone to join with us in Fort Worth and take a trip to Dallas on TRE to show that we do have systems that connect right now. This event will help create positive energy.

We have not yet arrived at a totally coordinated system, but we are raising awareness of the need for greater coordination. I am getting very excited about the potential we have in this area. This will be my third round trip on TRE from Fort Worth to Dallas. On June 26th we will have a special event in Dallas returning back to Fort Worth. We hope to have people along the TRE line join us for this event to show that this is really about people. It is not just about the commercial development, the power players. It's about people saying that they need transportation on a daily basis. When you get people interacting in a positive activity, such as this *March for Respect* in Dallas, it sets the tone for collaboration in general.

I am here to applaud the efforts of those people that work very hard on the issues of disabilities, social needs, and other issues demonstrating that we have a way that helps bring it together. Thanks.

Dan Gadbury, Mental Health Mental Retardation of Tarrant County

I am Dan Gadbury. I am the community relations expert for Mental Health Mental Retardation for Tarrant County. I want to make two basic points.

At MHMR, I help provide technical assistance to agencies finding employment for people with disabilities. One of the first criteria for employment, and therefore one of the barriers we run into in Tarrant County, is transportation. Depending on where people live, they may or may not have access to transit service. Coordination is lacking between some of the transit systems in the area, which makes it more difficult for disabled individuals to find and maintain employment.

The second point deals with the health and human services service transportation. I think that it is a positive step to move these services into TxDOT. One thing I want to note is that there are people on a fixed kind of Medicaid program called a Medicaid Waiver program. Some of these programs can pay for transportation for trips other than medical needs. It is at the discretion of the person on those programs. I would like you to consider allowing those people to identify themselves and to use those funds at the same rate as for regular Medicaid transportation.

A third point is that many people need transportation for non-medical trips. Although medical transportation is obviously important, the number one concern among people with disabilities, especially developmental disabilities, is the issue of employment. The basic quality of life is in question. Having access to jobs is just as important as getting to the doctor or even the hospital. Just trying to get out into everyday activities without transportation is very difficult.

Thanks for your time.

Jonnie Campbell, REACH of Fort Worth

Hi, I am Jonnie Campbell and I work for REACH of Fort Worth. At the Independent Living Center I work with people with disabilities and help them to become more independent. I see a lot of people with problems just getting to work. Finding a job that is on the bus line is critical. Many individuals are not able to walk to a bus stop and need special service. Funding is key to meeting the needs of these individuals!

I do not think it is fair that funding is currently based on what a system received in the past. That does not provide systems with any incentive to change. As we can all see, change has to happen. The Metroplex is very large. We have a lot of consumers who live outside Fort Worth who cannot travel to get needed services. Even though they may have been able to live at home and avoid going into a nursing home, they do not have transportation to get to training and job opportunities. Even though we are trying to deinstitutionalize people, as long as we keep them in their home, but do not provide needed transportation due to lack of funding, we are not helping the situation.

I also have a little of a problem with the fact that there are not more financial incentives for seeking federal funds. I would like to congratulate the Cleburne Transportation System. We have a consumer that lives out in King and he has to spend more monthly on his medication than he makes. He needs to travel to use our services so we can help him get pharmaceutical assistance. He has to come and fill out paperwork. For him to do that, he gets on a bus around 9:00 a.m. After spending time at our facility at a computer class he gets back on a bus and does not get home until 8:00 p.m. He is okay with doing that because it is important to him and he is able-bodied. We do have some systems out there that are trying to connect to rural areas. More funding should be provided to those systems so they can improve coordination. Someone who is not as able-bodied as this individual would not be able to do that from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. just so they do not have to pay \$675 a month for their medication when they only make \$600.

Performance and efficiency to me is the same thing. You cannot separate the two items. It is not just a matter of getting people from point A to point B. We do that all the time. NETS might come to my office three times a day to drop off four different people. That does not seem to make sense. Some of these people live in the same neighborhood and the same apartment complexes. It seems that one bus should be able to bring two or three at the same time. There appears to be room for better coordination. I think if we give funding to systems that are working on performance and efficiency, the service will improve. All we hear is that there is no money. We are not using the money that we have wisely. Thank you.

I have one other point that I forgot to bring up. This is a huge task that TxDOT is undertaking for the whole system and I want to make sure that whenever we go into this funding

formula that we keep in mind that it should be transitional. We should know that we are probably not going to get it all right the first time. So, if some part is not working, its okay. We should change as needed. I think that a lot of times people think they have to do it now, which is maybe why the system has been set-up as a “you get what you’ve always gotten system.” Let’s make sure we do not do that again.

Rita Goodner, North Texas SNAP, Inc.

I am Rita Goodner and I am President of a non-profit organization in Northeast Tarrant County called North Texas SNAP. We are an organization for people with disabilities.

We have no public transportation in Northeast Tarrant County. We currently have 114 members in our organization and are growing all the time as people graduate from high school and are going out looking for jobs and living their lives. We do have NETS in our area, but the problem with NETS is that they might cancel a prescheduled trip. My son works at Blockbuster and if he is scheduled for a ride to go to work on NETS and they get a call for a medical trip, he gets dropped from service. It is hard for someone to live independently if they cannot depend on reliable transportation. SNAP’s mission is to work to get community support so our neighbors can live independently. Reliable transportation is vital to this our mission. Thank you.

I wanted to say something else about NETS. The other problem with NETS is a lot of our people want to get part-time jobs. Many times those jobs are in the evenings and on the weekends. I think NETS provides service only to about 5:30 p.m. and there is no weekend service. People need transportation on weekends. Sometimes they need to get out and do some shopping and go to their jobs.

Omega Hawkin, Kaufman Area Rural Transit

My name is Omega Hawkins and I am the General Manager of Kaufman Are Rural Transit. We are a large rural county. We provide public transportation to the entire county. One of the issues that we think that has to be considered in the formula is the percentage of riders and the size of the service area. It is a little more time consuming to serve riders in a large rural area. We would like for that to be considered part of the formula.

The number of riders needing services at all times is growing. Industry in our little community of Terrell is growing by leaps and bounds. People are getting jobs on the night shifts. We are trying very hard to service these people because they are trying real hard to earn a living to take care of their families.

I think the population of a county should be considered in the formula, as well as the number of people using the service. The density of a county is also important. The density in much of our county is pretty good and then you can go 10 or 12 miles and not see a house. The people that live past that 10 or 12 miles need transportation just as well as those closer to town. However, costs are higher to serve these longer trips. So, trip distance also needs to be considered.

For years, KART was the only provider in our county. We did the Medicaid transportation, the public transportation, and the elderly transportation. We use to say we were the only transit agency in town, and we really still are. But someone decided that a taxi cab out

of Dallas should come into Kaufman County and take someone, I will call her Mrs. Smith, to her dialysis treatments. Mrs. Smith lives in Terrell and goes to a dialysis center in Terrell. The health and human services people are paying a cab to come out of Dallas and take Mrs. Smith from her home in Terrell to a dialysis center in Terrell. This is ridiculous! Something needs to be done about that situation. On the other days that Mrs. Smith needs to go to Wal-mart or get her hair done she calls us. Our service is perfectly fine for that type of trip, but for some reason we are not okay to provide the Medicaid transportation in Kaufman County. That is a big complaint of ours.

We ask that you return the health and human services contract to the transit providers that can do the complete job for the transit needy in our county. We also support the TTA proposal. We think that what they have thought out and planned would be very good for the state of Texas and would give us a direction that maybe we have not had in the past. As we grow, we need new direction and this proposal would be a good start. Thanks.

Comment Forms Received

Faye Beaulieu, Bedford, Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Keep transit portion of bill stable. Continue to fund 5310 monies and allow toll credits to be used as a local match to keep 5310 program in place. Also allow 5310 monies to be used for operations rather than just for capital. Keep 5311 monies stable, and continue to fund the JARC projects.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Northeast Tarrant County needs help in the public transportation area. The gridlock on Hwy 183 contributes to poor air quality, waste of revenues, and frustration. Whatever we can design to help the situation is appreciated. Our seniors need better options for medical, social, and shopping trips. Our financially at risk need options to get to jobs (many in our HEB area would have applied at the new Gaylord property if they would have had a way to get there). How do folks get to late-night positions if they have no transportation resources?

Lylette Pharr, Fort Worth, Tarrant

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation:

- needs of the population,
- effectiveness of current providers, and
- equitability.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. There are huge gaps in public transportation in Tarrant County, which greatly impacts the quality of life for too many people. People cannot get to jobs, seniors cannot get to doctors appointments, grocery stores, etc., and may affect how long they can maintain independent living. There is a need for more emphasis and funding for transit rather than focusing so much on highways. In addition, there is a need for greater collaboration regionally regarding transportation.

Summer Stringer, Fort Worth, Tarrant

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation:

- why is there a need? and
- population experiencing the need.

Angela Johnson, Watauga

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation:

- population served,
- equality for all people, and
- factors prohibiting transportation.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. There is no public transportation in Watauga. Nothing for the disabled. The community must rely on its neighbors for transportation – to the grocery store, medical appointments, and pharmacy visits. I also worked as a social worker for the past four years. My clients cannot get to work, interviews, counseling, pharmacies, and school.

Richard M. Lambert, Fort Worth Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. I think the drivers should be qualified to handle medical emergencies. I have seizures and I need someone that need to know what to do. The buses need to be low cost for people who are low-income like me.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. I do not think we have enough buses for the size of Fort Worth. Just because some of the little towns that surround Fort Worth should not mean that the people in the live in Fort Worth should be able to be taken and be picked up. Since they pay the fee on the bus they should be able to go to other areas. Pay the bus driver a decent wage.

Beth. Lambert, Fort Worth Tarrant County

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation.

1. A low cost fee for riding public transportation.
2. Better communication between drivers and dispatch for the disabled bus transportation system.
3. We need good qualified drivers who are courteous and helpful to the disabled and elderly who ride the disabled bus system.
4. We need a much better system of scheduling appointments for the disabled clients.
5. We need a system that can go outside the Tarrant County boundaries. Go to White Settlement, Saginaw, etc.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. We are grateful we have a transportation for the disabled and it has been very helpful but needs a lot of improvement

in the system. Clients have been left stranded and have had to find other ways to get home. Communication between drivers and dispatch are very poor. Clients want to be independent and do not need extra stress in dealing with dispatch operators to find out if there rides are late in arriving to get them.

Mary A. Lambert

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Better communication between MITS drivers and dispatchers. These buses are not equipped for some drive approaches.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in Your Area. Needs to go to all suburbs in Fort Worth. No more increases on bus fare. Drivers need have better attitudes.

Other Comments Received

Letter Received from Roger Nelson and Larry J. Cunningham, Northeast Urban Transportation Service (NETS)

On behalf of the Cities of Grapevine, North Richland Hills, and the Northeast Transportation Service Urban District (NETSUD) we would like to comment regarding changes to the funding formula for small urban and rural transportation providers. The Northeast Transportation Service (NETS) is small urban transportation entity that provides on-demand transportation service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities residing within the corporate limits of the cities of Bedford, Colleyville, Euless, Grapevine, Haltom City, Hurst, Keller, and North Richland Hills. These eight Northeast Tarrant County communities have entered into a unique cooperative effort to serve a combined population of approximately 330,000 (based on 2003 NCTCOG projections). In 2002, the member cities of NETS formed the NETS Urban Transit District (NETSUTD) to oversee the service and provide a conduit for federal, state, and local funds. The City of North Richland Hills is the direct recipient of the state funds for the NETSUTD.

NETS has received state funds since 1991. These funds have helped NETS provide an average of 1,285 trips per month for elderly and disabled citizens within the service area. Because of our proximity to a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, our funding level is capped. Although we cannot apply for funds under the regular state formula, when the budget is decreased we receive cuts in the same proportion as other providers.

Voters in North Richland Hills have approved the dedicated use of a portion of the city's sales tax revenues for Crime Control and Prevention District and Parks and Recreation Facilities Development. The other cities that are members of the NETSUTD are in similar situations. Because of this prior dedication, it is not possible for the NETSUTD member cities to join the Fort Worth Transportation Authority. Mandating the dedication of sales tax revenues to join neighboring transportation authorities not only harms current city revenues, it goes directly against the will of our citizens.

It is important that small urban transit providers have predictable levels of funding so that we can better plan for the future of our programs. Currently, the NETSUTD Board has to plan

our program on a year-to-year, and sometimes a month-to-month, basis due to the unpredictable nature of state and federal funding for small urban transportation, and cuts in state funding that often come mid-year. This year, the NETSUTD contracted with a service provider that has almost doubled the number of trips provided without an increase in funding through efficiencies in operations and trip coordination. The NETS service area has a current service population of approximately 56,760 (elderly and disabled population from 2000 Census), which is a far greater demand than we can currently meet. The NETS service provider has the ability to increase trips and ridership, but the NETSUTD Board has not been able to authorize efforts to increase ridership because we cannot guarantee that we will have funding to pay for the increase service.

With these concerns in mind, we submit the following considerations on behalf of the NETSUTD and its eight member cities:

- changes to the funding formula should not negatively impact funding levels to existing small urban transit providers;
- performance requirements attached to funding should be practical in that they promote advancements to continuing service;
- trip coordination should be a factor on the funding formula; and
- agency partnerships should be a factor;
- population of the service area, as well as demand should be a factor in the formula;
- cities should not be required to join a metropolitan transit authority or dedicate a portion of sales tax to do so, especially where the citizens have voted to dedicate the use of sales tax dollars to other programs.

The NETSUTD is providing a successful and innovative service that could improve and increase its level of service with predictable revenue. NETSUTD thanks you for your time and consideration of our comments on this issue.

EDINBURG LISTENING SESSION

International Trade and Technology Center, March 1, 2004

Attendees

Richard Hinojosa, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Manuel Flores, CRGUA
Norma Zamora, City of Brownsville Urban System (BUS)
Tom Logan, City of Brownsville Urban System (BUS)
Alex Lorio, City of Brownsville Urban System (BUS)
David De Leon, Harlingen San Benito Metropolitan Planning Organization
Cate Ball, The WAVE, City of South Padre Island
Robin Langwell, TxDOT Pharr District
Gracie Cantu, TxDOT Pharr District
Cindy Mueller, TxDOT Public Transportation Division

Gary Williams, TxDOT Public Transportation Division
Juan Villa, Texas Transportation Institute
Katie Turnbull, Texas Transportation Institute

Speaker Comments

Cate Ball, WAVE, City of South Padre Island

My name is Cate Ball and I am responsible for the WAVE, the public transportation system in South Padre Island. My comments focus on the unique characteristics of South Padre Island and the WAVE. I think our situation provides a good example of the difficulty associated with using the same performance or funding measures for all systems in the state. The City of South Padre Island and the WAVE illustrate the importance of considering the unique characteristics of different areas in the funding formula.

I hope TxDOT will reconsider basing the funding formula on population, which hurts areas like South Padre Island. According to the U.S. Census, the population of South Padre Island is approximately 2,420. During the tourist season, however, the population of South Padre Island averages some 40,000 to 80,000 people. During Spring Break, the Island averages upwards of some 100,000 people. These figures do not include Port Isabel and other adjacent areas. A formula based on population is not appropriate for South Padre Island.

I realize that other parts of the state, especially the major metropolitan areas, also draw large number of tourists. The percent change in the population of those areas is not as great as South Padre Island, however, because of their larger base. The influence of tourists on the population of South Padre Island and the WAVE is significant, and should be considered in any funding formula.

The second point I would like to make focuses on the categorization of funding by capital projects and operating support. If possible, it would be of help to provide funding to the transit systems, and leave the decision of how the funds are spent up to each system. I realize that some programs, such as Section 5311, designate a certain amount of funds for capital projects. This approach would provide more flexibility for each system to match funding to both capital and operating needs.

I am not sure if the commission is aware how difficult it is for transit systems to plan for the future when we do not know our funding levels from year to year. Although I think we have done a good job at the WAVE with providing needed service and adding service over the years, we could do more to increase service and attract more riders if we knew funding would be available 5-to-10 years from now. For example, South Padre Island is concerned about transportation to and from the Island from the airports in the area. Although we have had some initial discussions with airport personnel and other groups, it does not make sense to seriously consider any service unless we know that long-term funding will be available.

It is also very important for the commission to realize that adding transit services does not necessarily bring immediate results. It takes time to introduce services and build ridership. Our experience indicates that it take approximately a year to stabilize ridership on one route.

There appears to be a rush to change the funding formula without considering how any change will affect the various systems. I am not sure the commission realizes how a change in the funding formula may affect different transit systems.

I was unaware that the current funding formula includes a 10 percent set-aside for commission designated projects. I would like to get more information on this set-aside program and the projects that have been funded. I have heard that some funds have been spent on non-transit-related projects. I hope this information is not correct and I hope the funds are being spent on transit projects.

One of the comments Chairman Williamson made in the videotape related to providing services demanded by our citizens. Our clients want quick and convenient service. They do not want to have to wait an hour for the next bus. It takes capital and operating funds that we do not necessarily have to provide this type of service.

Currently, we operate two buses on 30-minute headways. Ridership more than doubled when we changed from a 60-minute headway to a 30-minute headway. I think ridership would more than double again if we were able to increase service to 15-minute headways. We would need more buses to increase to 15-minute headways, however. We do not currently have the capital funding to purchase additional vehicles. If we can provide fast, reliable, and convenient service, I think our ridership, and ridership on most systems in the state, would increase. We cannot add buses or service with the current funding levels.

I think it is important that no system lose funding under any formula change. I do not think any system can afford a decline in funding. I know we could not provide the existing service if our funding declines.

It is also important for the commission and the taxpayers to realize the benefits of transit – it is a good investment of tax dollars. Funding for transit needs to be more equitable with the amount spent on highways and roadways.

It is also difficult to plan for the future without knowing how much funding is available for health and human services. I do not think a funding formula can be developed without having a better idea of the amount of health and human services transportation funding and the influence it will have on different systems. Transit providers in each area should be part of the discussions related to changes in health and human services funding. If these groups are providing services at a higher cost than public transit operators, there should be some benefits in better coordination.

Norma Zamora, Brownsville Urban System (BUS)

My name is Norma Zamora. I am the Director for the City of Brownsville Urban System (BUS). I am also Vice President for Small Urban Systems of the Texas Transit Association (TTA). I thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment this evening on the funding formula. Based on the 2000 Census, the population of Brownsville has increased by 40 percent and the area covered by the city has expanded by 120 percent. At the same time, our service levels have not changed. We still operate on 60-minute headways. Our funding levels have not increased. As a result, we have not been able to keep up with recent growth.

We cannot increase service levels even though people are asking for more service. Some of our riders have to walk up to an hour to get to the nearest bus stop, often with children and in inclement weather. I realize many systems around the state are facing the same problems, but I want to be sure that the commission is aware of our situation.

I would like to urge the department and the commission to consider the following points outlined by the TTA.

Transit districts are committed to continued input from consumers about our services, after all that is what we are in business to do, serve the public. Our success depends on customer satisfaction. If there are suggestions on how to improve that process, we are always open to ideas. Consumers and their advocates should be most concerned about the lack of funding to effectively market and deploy needed services.

There are transit districts that are under-funded, and we think that TxDOT should immediately take steps to assist those districts by releasing the 10 percent set-aside for commission selected projects to those districts that demonstrate the need for additional funding.

TxDOT should engage the services of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to scientifically inventory the level of service provided by each transit district so that quantitative decisions can be made for funding needs of each district and for the state as a whole, and a plan can be developed to meet those needs.

An inventory of the amounts and categories of human service transportation funding and service needs should also be commissioned from TTI so that informed decisions can be made by TxDOT in assuming its new responsibilities.

TxDOT should ensure there is no interruption or disruption in funding for districts by adopting the formula allocation procedures that were in place prior to their repeal in the last legislative session as an interim distribution mechanism. This mechanism will remain in place until the results of the service inventory and studies cited above are completed, the results analyzed, and a plan is adopted pursuant to the findings.

Human service transportation funding administered by TxDOT should be used to build all transit districts' ability to serve all citizens with one community transportation system. This should be done through interlocal agreements with the appropriate accountability built into the system to satisfy state and federal requirements with respect to the human service funds and those assurances necessary to ensure clients access to the system. There should be one transportation system for all Texans.

Texas has been nationally recognized for its advances in transit services. TxDOT should call on the transit industry for peer assistance to advance a service model that can help those districts that need it in the integration of human service and public transportation. To date all decisions and deliberations have been made without any industry collaboration. The view that we have a vested interest in funding decisions so we should not be consulted begs the question of how we set about improving service delivery across the state.

Thank you for considering these items and for allowing me to speak this evening.

Richard Hinojosa, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

I am Richard Hinojosa and I am with the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council. We cover Cameron, Willacy, and Hidalgo Counties. We have a rural provider, a small urban provider, and a large urban provider in the three counties.

Because we have all three systems, we see the funding problems associated with each. For example, the large urban system has available funding, but is now limited to capital expenditures only. We hope this situation will change in the near future.

I would like to echo the comments made by Cate and Norma related to the small urban and rural systems. We all want to provide the best possible service with the funds available to us. Any reduction in funding reduces the level of service we are able to provide. I think we all try to do what Chairman Williamson talked about in the video, that is to provide service to the people who need it. Any reduction in current funding levels will only curtail service. I think all three systems in our area are growing to meet increasing demands as best we can based on available funding. I want to stress that any reduction in the formal funds for all three providers in this region will only reduce the amount of service we are able to provide.

Any formula that is finalized for the state that results in a reduction in funding for any system would be counter productive to the Chairman's message. Reducing funding would waste the previous investments that have been made in transit services in many areas, including this region.

I have been with the Council for 12 years. While transit was new to me when I first started with the Council, I have been actively involved in different transit studies and reviews of the funding formula over the years. I think there have been at least three attempts to alter the funding formula since I joined the Council. Each time the issue has been examined, the conclusion has emerged that the existing formula appears to be the fairest. It would be great if a new formula can improve upon the current situation, but it should not reduce existing funding levels. It does seem premature to adopt a new formula without knowing the full affects of the health and human services funds. Further changes may be needed once the full affect of the health and human services is known.

South Padre Island is a unique situation. As Cate noted, the WAVE serves the local population and visitors. One only needs to visit the Island over the next three to four weeks to better understand the important role the WAVE plays. The Island's busiest tourist time is during spring break. The WAVE provides mobility for residents and visitors during this period, as well as all year long. Any funding formula should provide flexibility to address special situations such as South Padre Island. The WAVE's funding needs to be kept at the current level or increased. I guarantee if the commission would visit South Padre Island during spring break they would see how important the WAVE is to mobility on the Island.

I hope that any new formula would not reduce current funding levels to any system. The small urban and rural transit systems in the state provide important services. Thank you.

Gracie Cantu, TxDOT Pharr District

My name is Gracie Cantu and I am the Public Transportation Coordinator for the TxDOT Pharr District. We have a transit advisory committee that provides guidance on recommendations for the 5310 program and other efforts. The three-year the adopted plan includes a number of needed projects. One item the group has raised that has not been brought up this evening, is the need for special consideration in the funding formula for communities along the Texas/Mexico Border.

The border communities are in a unique situation. In addition to meeting the transit needs of residents, we also have to address the travel needs of “Winter Texans” and Mexican residents who cross the border for work, shopping, and recreational trips. The Brownsville and McAllen areas, especially, serve many people from Mexico who cross the border on a daily basis.

Norma Zamora – Follow-Up Comment

A feasibility study on a potential multimodal terminal was recently completed. The study included an assessment of ridership. The study results indicate that some 30 percent of our current ridership walk across the bridge from Mexico on a daily basis for work, shopping, and medical trips. Some 30 percent of the riders on the private transportation services are also from Mexico. In some cases, these individuals are making connections for trips to other parts of the state and other parts of the country.

A significant percentage of our ridership is coming from Mexico. It is difficult to keep up with these demands, especially when we face growing needs to serve our residents. We currently transport about 5,500 passengers daily. This number could be twice as high, but we are limited in the amount of service we can provide based on current funding. We especially need more operating funds to meet the growth demands for all groups.

Comment Forms Received

No Name Provided, Harlingen, Tx

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. Lack of services, incentives for best practices, and improvement of current systems.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Our county is primarily rural, and for that matter so is the Rio Grande Valley. Our rural transportation system needs to have a greater allocation on the funding side. This will provide services where needed.

Manuel Flores, Cameron, Hidalgo, and William Counties

Key Factors in Allocating Funding for Public Transportation. There is a need for transportation services for the low income, elderly, and disabled. In 2003, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council had over 400,000 trips. The increase in ridership also increases the cost to operate a transit system.

Other Information Regarding Public Transportation in your Area. Section 5311 in our area is already providing limited transportation. The lack of funds only allows us to provide two or three days of service for one of our six routes.

APPENDIX A – LISTENING SESSION FORMAT

Opening Remarks and Welcome – TxDOT Public Transportation Division Staff

On behalf of TxDOT, it is a pleasure to welcome you to this listening session. The focus of this session is to hear your comments on the funding formula and other topics. The agenda for the meeting is as follows. We will play a short video with a message from Ric Williamson, Chairman of the Transportation Commission. TxDOT staff will then review the handouts summarizing the current formula and the schedule for developing a new formula. TTI staff will facilitate the comment period when you will have the opportunity to share your ideas and concerns. We are here to listen to you and thank you for participating in this session.

Video Message from Chairman Ric Williamson

On behalf of the Texas Transportation Commission and Governor Rick Perry, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome you to this very important public hearing.

You know all of us in this room understand that our public transportation and health and human services transportation systems are not always as coordinated as we wish, and sometimes do not deliver the services that are demanded by our citizens. Governor Perry, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, and Speaker Tom Craddick, the members of the Texas Senate and Texas House of Representatives challenged the Texas Department of Transportation to develop a comprehensive plan to address the weaknesses in our system.

We accept this challenge. The problem is we cannot be successful without your help. The purpose of this meeting today, and meetings that will occur all across this state, is to get your input and get your ideas. We want to know your ideas. We want to know your vision on community-based transit and health and human services transportation systems that will work for you within a regional system to be developed by the transportation department.

Texas is a big state. Our population is diverse and the problems we face across this big state are as diverse as that population. For example, in urban Texas we cannot map a transportation plan without taking into account the clean air challenges that we face. Yet, in rural Texas the biggest challenge frequently is just finding a way of moving the elderly back and forth from urban areas to receive much needed medical attention.

We need you to speak up. We need you to express your opinion. We cannot be successful if you do not participate in this local planning process. You know, I'm getting older every day and I have children and I would like to think that as they age I do my part to prepare a better Texas for my children. I know you feel the same about your children, your grandchildren, and the other young Texans that will need a good transportation system.

So, belly up to the bar and help us out.

Overview of Rulemaking Process Timeline – TxDOT Public Transportation Division Staff

We would like to summarize the handouts. The first pages summarize how TxDOT currently allocates funding for different types of transit systems in the state. The two maps show the location of the rural and small urban systems.

The handout also includes a timeline on the process TxDOT is following in examining the funding formula. As a state agency, TxDOT must follow an established process before any changes can be made. The following methods are being used to obtain input from providers, riders, local agencies, decision-makers, and other individuals and groups:

- a videoconference public meeting linking all 25 TxDOT districts;
- six public meetings in Houston, Waco, Tyler, San Angelo, Fort Worth, and Edinburg;
- comment cards at the videoconference and public meetings, which could be turned in at the meetings or mailed in; and
- an Internet comment site at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>.

As noted in the handout, a recommendation for proposed revisions to the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) will be made to the commission on April 29. A public comment period will occur from May 14 to June 14 and a public hearing will be held after May 24. The commission will take action adopting the TAC revisions on June 24 and the recommended allocation of state funding based on the new formula will be considered at the July 29 Commission meeting.

Format for Listening Session – TTI Staff

This portion of the videoconference listening session is to hear from you. This part of the meeting is not a question and answer session. Rather, we are here to listen to your suggestions and ideas. We will be recording your comments to help ensure they are accurately reflected in the report. We ask that you limit your comments to three-to-five minutes to ensure that everyone wishing to speak has the opportunity to do so.

Session Close – TxDOT Public Transportation Division Staff

Thank you again for taking the time from your busy schedules to participate in this listening session. Your thoughts and ideas are important to TxDOT as we work on the funding formula and other efforts. Let me remind you of the other methods to provide input to this process. These methods include completing a comment card at this meeting, taking a comment card with you and mailing it to TTI, and providing your comments on the Internet <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>. Thank you again.

APPENDIX B – PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FORMULA MEETING HANDOUTS

AGENDA

Public Transportation Funding Allocation Listening Session Statewide Video Teleconference February 10, 2004

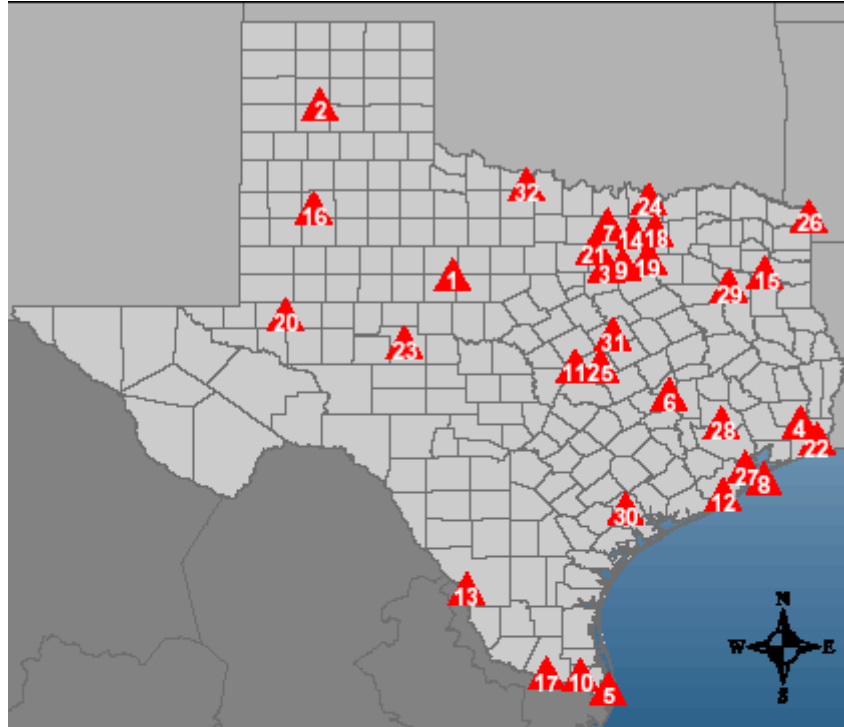
- | | |
|--|--|
| • Opening Remarks & Welcome | Susan N. Bryant, Director
Public Transportation Division |
| • Video Message | Ric Williamson, Chair
Texas Transportation
Commission |
| • Overview | Rulemaking Process Timeline
Susan N. Bryant, Director
Public Transportation Division |
| • Session Ground Rules/Format/
Facilitate Listening Session/
Session Close | Katie Turnbull,
Texas Transportation Institute |

STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

PLANNED TIMELINE FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

TENTATIVE DATES

PUBLIC MEETINGS/LISTENING SESSIONS	FEBRUARY 10-27
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE [PTAC] MEETING	MARCH
RECOMMEND PROPOSED TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE [TAC] REVISIONS TO TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	APRIL 29
PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD	MAY 14 - JUNE 14
PUBLIC HEARING	AFTER MAY 24
2nd PTAC MEETING	JUNE 14-18
RECOMMEND FINAL ADOPTION OF TAC REVISIONS TO TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	JUNE 24
TAC REVISIONS BECOME EFFECTIVE	JULY
RECOMMEND ALLOCATION OF STATE FUNDING TO TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION	JULY 29

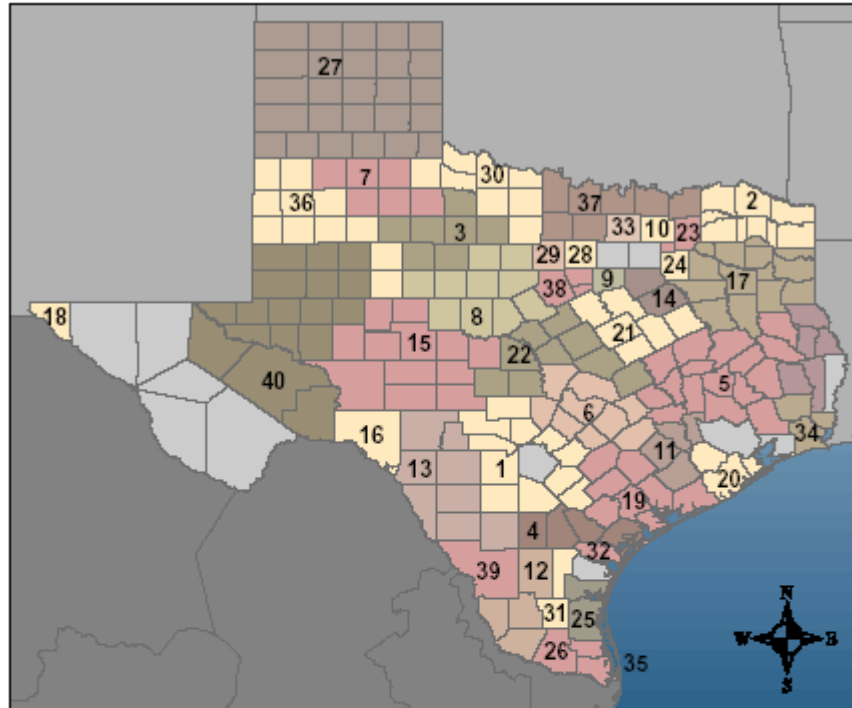


FTA Section 5307 Small Urbanized Area Public Transportation Providers

Code	Provider	Code	Provider	Code	Provider
1	Arlene: CityLink	12	Lake Jackson-Angleton	23	San Angelo Street Railroad Company
2	Amarillo: Amarillo City Transit	13	Laredo: El Metro	24	Sherman Division: Tarrant COG
3	Arlington: Handlman	14	Lewisville: Dial-A-Ride	25	Temple: The HOP
4	Beaumont: Beaumont Municipal Transit	15	Longview: C/DLT	26	Texasiana Urban Transit District
5	Brownsville: Brownsville Urban System	16	Lubbock: Citibus	27	Texas City-Lufkin: Connect Transportation
6	Bryan-College Station: The D	17	McAllen: McAllen Express	28	The Woodlands
7	Denton: LINK	18	McKinney	29	Tyler: Tyler Transit
8	Galveston: Island Transit	19	Mesquite: MTED	30	Victoria: Victoria Transit
9	Grand Prairie: The Grand Connection	20	Midland-Odessa Urban Transit District	31	Waco: Waco Transit
10	Harlingen-San Benito Express	21	North Richland Hills: NETS	32	Wichita Falls: Wichita Falls Transit
11	Killeen: The HOP	22	Port Arthur: Port Arthur Transit		

Public Transportation Division January 30, 2004





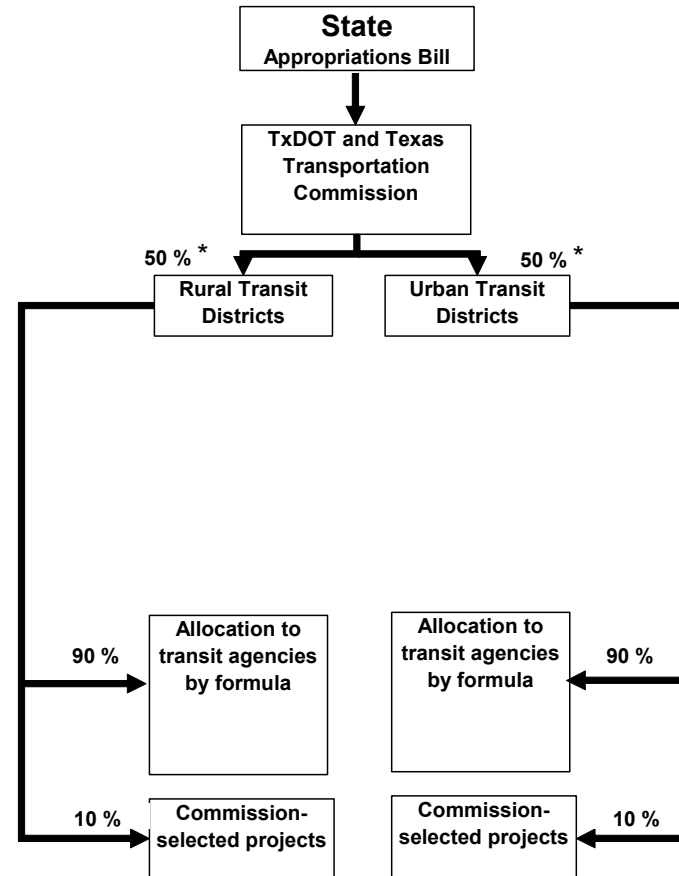
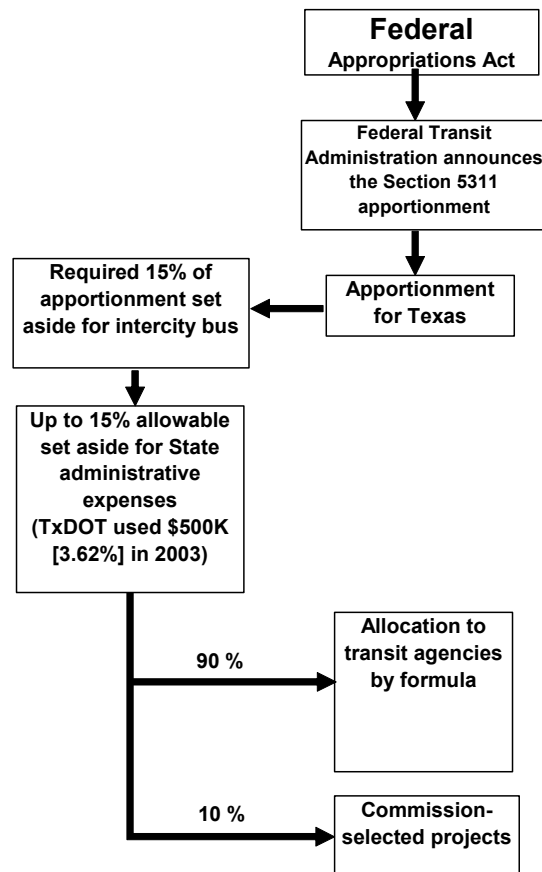
FTA Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Public Transportation Providers

Code	Provider	Code	Provider	Code	Provider
1	Alamo Area COG	15	Concho Valley COG	29	Public Transit Services
2	Ark-Tex COG	16	City of Del Rio	30	Rolling Plains Management Corp
3	Aspermont SBDC	17	East Texas COG	31	Rural Economic Assistance League
4	Baile Community Action Agency	18	County of El Paso	32	San Patricio County CAA
5	Brazos Transit District	19	Golden Crescent RPC	33	Services Program for Aging/Needs
6	Capital Area Rural Transportation System	20	Gulf Coast Center	34	South East Texas RPC
7	Caprock Community Action Agency	21	Heart of Texas COG	35	Town of South Padre Island
8	Central Texas Rural Transit District	22	Hill Country Transit District	36	South Plains Community Action Agency
9	Clatsan	23	Hunt County Committee on Aging	37	Texas Area Paratransit System
10	Collin County Committee on Aging	24	Kaufman County Senior Citizens Services	38	The Transit System
11	Colorado Valley Transit	25	Kleberg County Human Services	39	Wabbe County Community Action Agency
12	Community Action Council of South Texas	26	Lower Rio Grande Valley Dvlpmnt. Center	40	West Texas Opportunities, Inc.
13	Community Council of Southwest Texas	27	Panhandle Community Services		
14	Community Transit Service	28	Parker County Transportation Service		

Public Transportation Division October 8, 2003



Current Rural and Urban Area Public Transportation Funding Processes



* Unless otherwise specified in State Appropriations Bill

CURRENT FEDERAL [SECTION 5311] RURAL FUNDING PROCESS: TxDOT calculates allocations in this program as follows:

15% of the annual apportionment is required to be set aside for intercity bus projects

- Allowable State administrative costs are not to exceed 15% of the annual apportionment. TxDOT has historically used only 3-4% [\$500K] of the apportionment.
- The resulting balance, plus any remaining funds from the previous years' apportionments, are allocated 90% to the Rural Transit Districts and 10% for Commission-selected projects for expansion and strategic priority projects.

The 90% allocation to Rural Transit Districts is calculated with the criteria that each transit district receives the same percentage of Federal funds as they received in the previous year, except where the calculation and/or award is adjusted to:

- Include the non-capital portion of expansion awards
- Exclude strategic priority awards
- Include a negotiated adjustment by TxDOT and the Rural Transit District because the United States Census Bureau designated a portion of the service area as an urbanized area, or the service area was otherwise altered.

CURRENT STATE RURAL FUNDING PROCESS: The Texas Transportation Commission awards state funds by formula to Rural and Urban Transit Districts. Transit Authorities, which are specifically organized under State law and receive funding from sales taxes, are not eligible for this state funding.

Allocations of state funding are calculated every two years. The following calculation is used in the formula process unless otherwise specified by the state appropriations bill: Total state funding is divided such that 50% is allocated to Rural Transit Districts and 50% is allocated to Urban Transit Districts. In each case, the allocation is then split, with 90% allocated directly to the transit districts and 10% allocated for Commission-selected projects.

For Rural Transit Districts, the allocation is calculated by formula as follows:
$$D = T \left(\frac{F}{A} \right)$$

Where: D is the amount allocated to an individual Rural Transit District

T is the total amount to be allocated (90% of the total)

F is the amount of federal funding allocated to an individual Rural Transit District during the preceding year

A is the amount of federal funding allocated to all Rural Transit Districts during the preceding year

CURRENT STATE URBAN FUNDING PROCESS The Texas Transportation Commission awards state funds by formula to Rural and Urban Transit Districts. Transit Authorities, which are specifically organized under State law and receive funding from sales taxes, are not eligible for this state funding. Designated areas which are located in an urbanized area with one or more Transit Authorities, but are not included in a Transit Authority, have funding level caps and matching ratios. These areas are Arlington, Grand Prairie, Mesquite, and North Richland Hills.

Allocations of state funding are calculated every two years. The following calculation is used in the formula process unless otherwise specified by the state appropriations bill: Total state funding is divided such that 50% is allocated to Rural Transit Districts and 50% is allocated to Urban Transit Districts. In each case, the allocation is then split, with 90% allocated directly to the transit districts and 10% allocated for Commission-selected projects.

For Urban Transit Districts, the allocation is calculated by formula as follows:
$$D = T \left(\frac{S}{A} \right)$$

Where: D is the amount allocated to an individual Urban Transit District

T is the total amount to be allocated (90% of the total)

S is the amount of state funding spent by an individual Urban Transit District during the preceding state biennium

A is the amount of state funding spent by all Urban Transit Districts during the preceding state biennium

Public Transportation Formula Meeting Comment Form

1. What is your city and county of residence? _____
2. Please list what you believe should be the key factors in allocating funding for public transportation.

3. Please provide any other information regarding public transportation in your area.

Optional:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip Code _____ E-Mail _____

Please return this form to the TxDOT district office facilitator at the close of the Listening Session or mail it by **March 1, 2004** to:

Ms. Bonnie Duke
Administrative Coordinator
Texas Transportation Institute
Texas A&M University System, 3135 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3135

You may comment on the internet at: www.dot.state.tx.us select "Public Transportation"

TxDOT Public Transportation Funding Allocation Listening Sessions

Forma para comentarios de la Reunión sobre Formulario de financiamiento para el Transporte Público

1. En qué ciudad y condado reside usted? _____

2. Favor de listar lo que usted cree que son los factores claves en la asignación de fondos para el transporte público.

3. Favor de anotar cualquier otro dato o información acerca del transito público en su área.

Opcional:

Nombre y apellido _____

Dirección _____

Ciudad _____ Código Postal _____

Dirección de correo electrónico (e-mail) _____

Favor de entregar esta forma al coordinador de la oficina del distrito de TxDOT al final de la Sesión Informática o enviar por correo **antes del 1º de marzo de 2004** a:

Ms. Bonnie Duke
Administrative Coordinator
Texas Transportation Institute
Texas A&M University System, 3135 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-3135

También puede hacer comentarios por medio del Internet en: www.dot.state.tx.us escoger "Publicó Transportación"

